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ABSTRACT

This report describes an ongoing, large scale evaluation of First Things First (FTF), a district-wide comprehensive school reform initiative in Kansas City, Kansas. FTF is an example of a theory of change initiative, which entails specifying and sequencing each step required to achieve the desired outcomes in order to monitor early, intermediate, and long-term results. The report documents strategies and activities of FTF partners from the preparatory phase through the first year of implementation, which involved two groups of elementary and secondary schools. It also assesses the extent to which these activities were successful in achieving early outcomes: creating the conditions and building the capacity of the system's key stakeholders to plan and begin reform. Chapter 1 introduces the effort. Chapter 2 describes the reform model. Chapter 3 discusses creating the conditions and building the capacity for change (e.g., preparing district leadership for change and reallocating central office resources). Chapter 4 discusses planning for change at the building level (variations in district level activities with clusters and variations in contextual characteristics of schools). Chapter 5 looks at the effectiveness of district activities in achieving early outcomes of FTF (e.g., examining cluster level early outcomes, assessing awareness and knowledge of FTF, and assessing the sense of urgency and commitment to FTF). Three appendices contain research methodology. (Contains 30 references.) (SM)

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First Things First:

Creating the Conditions & Capacity

for Community-Wide Reform

in an Urban School District

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PREFACE

This report is the first publication about an ongoing, large-scale evaluation of a District-wide, comprehensive school reform initiative underway in Kansas City, Kansas called *First Things First* (FTF). The initiative is directed and implemented by a partnership of three organizations: the Kansas City, Kansas school District; the Institute for Research and Reform in Education – developer of the FTF framework and primary technical assistance provider to the District; and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation – FTF's major private supporter.

The FTF model is an example of the newer breed of comprehensive reform, called "theory of change" initiatives, which took shape in the 1990s as a promising approach to systems change. The theory of change approach entails specifying and sequencing each step required to achieve the desired systemic outcomes, which allows for early, intermediate and long-term progress and outcomes to be identified and monitored over the course of a reform. This approach is increasingly being adopted, particularly for system-wide reforms, for two reasons.

First and foremost, the implementation of change is expected to improve because stakeholders reflect on, and agree to, the strategies to be undertaken at the outset of their work; there is a built-in mechanism for considering whether adjustments are needed early in the change process.

Second, a theory of change approach provides a mechanism for rigorous evaluation of the effects of reform when establishing traditional comparison or control groups is impractical and/or inappropriate – as is often the case when an entire system is being reformed. Because the connections between implementation activities and outcomes for each phase of an initiative are laid out in advance, evaluators can test these hypothesized linkages as the initiative unfolds, to assess both whether the theory of change is correct, and whether the initiative is on course.

This report documents the strategies and activities of the Kansas City, Kansas FTF partners from the preparatory phase of the initiative through the first year of implementation, which involved two groups of schools (i.e., six secondary and 15 elementary schools representing half the District). The report also assesses the extent to which these activities were successful in achieving the early outcomes: creating the conditions and building the capacity of the system's key stakeholders (political leaders, administrative staff and building staff) to plan and begin reform.

Although the ultimate success of the effort has yet to be judged – whether it improves student achievement District-wide – we believe the findings and lessons from the early work in Kansas City, Kansas are of interest to a broad audience (within and outside the field of education) for three reasons.

First, the strategies used by the FTF partners, and their success in sustaining the initiative over the four years covered in this report, are notable for any long-term initiative aimed at system-wide reform, whether in education or other community systems. The scope of the consensus-building strategies used, and the joint accountability plans drawn up by the initiative partners, served to sustain the reform and preserve its integrity under conditions that typically derail such efforts. There are important lessons here about the kinds of pressure and support needed to ensure the continuation of reform through the political changes, leadership changes and staff resistance that can be expected over the course of any long-term reform effort.

Second, the FTF model, by design, contains many of the structural and instructional reforms common to a number of the leading comprehensive school reform models. There are still debates in the education field about whether structural or instructional change should come first, but most agree both are required to achieve significant improvements in student achievement. The FTF model calls for both types of reform. This report provides some early lessons about the different pace of, and the different reactions to, planning for structural versus instructional change.

Third, the FTF experience can inform the debate in the education field, and in the broader field of system reform, about the appropriate blend of model prescriptiveness and local autonomy. On the one hand, change frameworks need to be clear enough about the reforms required to prioritize and direct the work of stakeholders. On the other hand, change frameworks need to allow for enough local decision-making to achieve the necessary commitment to reform, while at the same time avoiding the trap of endless process.

The FTF model took the approach of specifying the changes needed and the process to be used to prepare and plan for change; but left the selection of building strategies from implementation in the hands of staff. Because there are only a limited number of options for achieving the structural reforms specified in the model, FTF from the outset was clear about the changes that would be required to accomplish these reforms. Yet as the partners codified these options in order to facilitate the planning process for the second group of schools to undergo reform, some building-level staff perceived this as a restriction of their autonomy.

In contrast, because of leadership changes in the early years of the initiative, a direction for instructional change was not set until 1999. This lack of early clarity created both wider debate in the District around these reforms, and a slower pace for identifying and implementing the necessary supports for instructional change.

The Kansas City, Kansas, experience thus tells an interesting story about the precarious balancing act required to keep reform moving forward and faithful to the model, while at the same time satisfying the need for local autonomy.

Finally, the FTF model was selected in 1999 by the Office of Research and Educational Improvement (OERI) at the U.S. Department of Education as one of seven models to undergo further development and testing in order to identify effective models for improving adolescents' school performance. The findings of this report are therefore of direct import for the additional sites now undertaking FTF as part of the OERI-funded expansion. The capacity-building and planning strategies currently being used by the initiative leaders in these sites have already been refined to incorporate some of the early lessons from the Kansas City, Kansas experience. This report serves both to provide the context for these changes in strategy (for example, in the structure of the planning process for school building staff) that will be outlined in future reports on the expansion sites; and to detail for these sites and others the overall importance of achieving stakeholder knowledge of, and commitment to, the reforms required under FTF.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The difficulties faced by children growing up in communities where customary social and economic resources are declining or are in short supply have not changed over the last 10 years. Children in these communities – urban and rural – are more likely to live in poverty, less likely to have access to community services and resources, more likely to attend failing school systems, less likely to graduate, less likely to go on to post-secondary training, and more likely to be unemployed or earning poverty-level wages as young adults (Halperin, 1998).

What *has* changed over the last decade is the fundamental approach to seeking solutions to these problems. The 1980s were dominated by efforts to identify and "treat" children and adolescents who were failing to thrive by creating limited programs designed to address specific problems. Young people in trouble, or at risk for trouble, were placed in programs to reduce school failures, dropping out, drug use and teen pregnancy, and increase job skills, etc. – but no significant increase in better outcomes for youth was achieved (Berends, et al., 2001; Brown and Ernig, 1999; Hauser and Sweeney, 1997; Maggs, et al., 1997; Padilla, 1997; Plank and Jordan, 1997).

So the "safety net" approach to policy and intervention, for the most part, began to give way in the late 90s to a "youth development" approach. Its hallmark is the recognition that many communities' systems and institutions are failing to meet children's basic developmental needs; and when the building blocks of development are not in place, significant numbers of youth fail to achieve our basic goals for them. As public policymakers, private funders and leaders of community institutions have become more knowledgeable about the role the social environment plays in youth development, the focus is shifting away from fixing *people* who fail, to fixing the *systems and institutions* responsible for providing the supports and experiences needed by *all* youth in order to become successful adults.

This shift toward more systemic reform has led to the advent of both publicly and privately funded initiatives aimed at retooling virtually any community institution influencing the development of youth – from education and health care to after-school care and juvenile justice. But these comprehensive efforts face a more complex set of challenges than do the limited programmatic interventions of the past. The designers and implementers of the new efforts need first to identify a system's shortcomings and develop plans for improvement – a significant undertaking on its own. However, these reformers also face the challenges of developing consensus among a system's diverse stakeholders about the need for change, developing a mechanism for creating the local ownership and buy-in needed to ensure participation, and developing the resources and capacity needed for successful implementation.

The initiative that is the subject of this evaluation and report – *First Things First* – is one such system reform effort, aimed at comprehensive, District-wide education reform. The initiative was launched in 1996 by a partnership of the Kansas City, Kansas School District, the Institute for Research and Reform in Education (the designer of the reform model) and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Lessons from the stakeholders' early efforts are instructive in two ways. First, the initiative's approach to creating consensus, local buy-in and increased capacity contributes to

general knowledge of what is required to initiate and support a community-wide reform – whether in education or any other community system. The early years of First Things First (FTF) also hold lessons about the specific challenges entailed in reforming the education system – a system generally considered both critical for preparing children for adulthood, and impervious to change.

For these reasons, this report on the capacity-building, planning and first year of implementation of FTF (1996-2000) was prepared well before the ultimate success or failure of the effort can be judged. While the impact on students' achievement and long-term outcomes will take at least two more years to unfold, the approach and processes to date are detailed here. This report describes the reform plan and the strategies used to launch the initiative, and to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in achieving the early goals of the work. Future reports will examine the initiative's progress and success in implementation and evaluate the impact of the reforms on student outcomes.

The next chapter describes the educational policy context in which FTF was developed, the content of the FTF model and the history of how the initiative came to be undertaken in Kansas City, Kansas. Chapter III describes the strategies and activities implemented by the initiative "partners" – the School District, technical assistance provider and funder – to build both District administration and school-building capacity to implement the change effort. Chapter IV describes the strategies used by 21 school buildings in creating their local plans and preparing for change. And Chapter V examines the success of these efforts in producing the early outcomes hypothesized to be the necessary conditions for successful implementation.

CHAPTER II

THE REFORM MODEL

In the same way that the broader youth development field is following a path away from discrete programmatic efforts toward systemic reform aimed at improving developmental settings for youth, the field of education reform is similarly shifting emphasis. A wave of school reform in the 1960s and 1970s often attempted to meet the needs of failing schools by funneling additional money into poor quality public schools, with no guidance for how those dollars should be used to improve teaching, curricula or achievement. Another wave of reform efforts advocated narrowly focused approaches, concentrating on a single academic subject, a particular group of students or a certain component of school operations. These piecemeal solutions included new curricula, "computers in every class," up-to-date textbooks, and so on. When these efforts failed to produce desired results, teachers were asked to try layering these programs one on top of another. This led to increased teacher burnout and heightened cynicism toward school reform efforts.

During the 1980s, the focus of many educational reform efforts began shifting from programmatic efforts toward system-wide reforms. One of the first of these systemic approaches was the "standards" movement. While implemented in many different ways, standards strategies had three key features:

- High academic standards set by the state, specifying what all students should know and be able to do;
- Policies such as required testing, accountability, teacher certification and professional development tied to the new, challenging standards; and
- Restructured educational governance to enable local teachers and schools to decide upon the specific instructional programs they would use to achieve the standards (Massell, Kirst, & Hoppe, 1997).

Unfortunately, states and Districts found it difficult to put standards-based reform into practice in a systemic way. One major problem was that the accountability aspects of the standards movement outpaced efforts to provide schools, teachers and students with the capacity to reach the standards. And while there were often consequences for failure, such as loss of funding or state take-over, there were few rewards for success (Olson, 2000a).

Disappointed with the outcomes achieved by existing reforms, "comprehensive school reforms" came to the forefront in the early 1990s. This new generation of reform emphasized individual models based on what research showed worked in the classroom. Although they vary in approach, all comprehensive school reform models use a single school-wide vision as a focus for redesigning curriculum, student assessment, professional development, governance, management and other key functions (American Institutes for Research, 1999; Berends, et al., 2001). With a few exceptions (e.g., Kentucky School Reform Bill, Comer's School Development Project), most educators still thought of systemic reform as reforming all the components of a single school or a network of schools in different communities.

It wasn't until the late 1990s that reformers began to recognize the need to change systems at both the school level *and* at the District and state levels. Several foundations financed such comprehensive systemic education reform (Annenberg Institute, 2000; Baldwin, 2000). Currently, a national task force convened by the

Annenberg Institute for School Reform is tackling the question of how to redesign Districts so that a large number of high-performing schools can flourish. The task force hopes to focus on the key kinds of supports and services that Districts provide to schools and how supports need to be rethought in light of standards-based reform (Olson, 2000b).

It was within this context that the FTF initiative was undertaken in Kansas City, Kansas (KCK) in 1996. The Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE) combined into a single, comprehensive model its own and other's research on the essential features of whole school reform, research on organizational change, research on youth development, and a plan for initiating and supporting change through District-wide restructuring and realignment of resources. This model – or "theory of change" – was used from the outset of the initiative to garner support from, and guide the activities of, all stakeholders including the funders, the District leadership, the school board, school-building administrators, school-building staff and the community.

Because of the centrality of the FTF theory of change to both the initiative and the research design used to evaluate it, the next section briefly lays out the framework and identifies its parts that are evaluated in this report. This is followed in Chapter III by a description of the partners in the FTF initiative and the activities they undertook in the early years of the effort.

I. The First Things First Framework[1]

The FTF theory of change (shown in Figure 1) is a framework that proposes a set of early, intermediate and long-term changes needed to produce system-wide, significant improvement in student outcomes. Starting with the longer-term outcomes desired for youth, the model works backward to the developmental milestones in education needed to achieve these outcomes, outlines the supports and experiences required to achieve these milestones, describes the school-building restructuring necessary to ensure these supports are in place for both students and adults, and outlines the District-level activities required to create the conditions and capacity for system-wide change. Figure 1 illustrates the key elements and outcomes associated with each of these steps, which are briefly described below.

- *Box A: What are the long-term goals for youth?*

The long-term outcomes – decent jobs, good relationships and the ability to contribute to the community in positive ways (Box A, Figure 1) – are policy goals we care most about. These are also the outcomes that require good outcomes in the early school-aged years (Brown & Emig, 1999; Halperin, 1999; Hauser & Sweeney, 1997; Maggs, et al., 1997; Plank & Jordan, 1997).

- *Box B: What educational outcomes lead to these long-term goals?*

Longitudinal research has shown that children must master the ability to be productive in order to achieve later success in life (Brown & Emig, 1999; Hauser & Sweeney, 1997; Maggs, et al., 1997; Padilla, 1997; Plank & Jordan, 1997). During the school years the two markers of this developmental milestone that most strongly

[1]The version of the FTF framework presented here is the one used for the first three years of work in KCK. As the initiative has unfolded, the framework has been revised to reflect feedback during the progress of the effort. This type of modification is a hallmark of using a "theory of change" process to guide any initiative. For a description of the revised version of the framework see *First Things First: A Framework for Successful School-site Reform*, June 2000. For a description of the theory of change process see *You Can Get There From Here: Using A Theory of Change Approach to Plan Urban Education Reform*, 2000.

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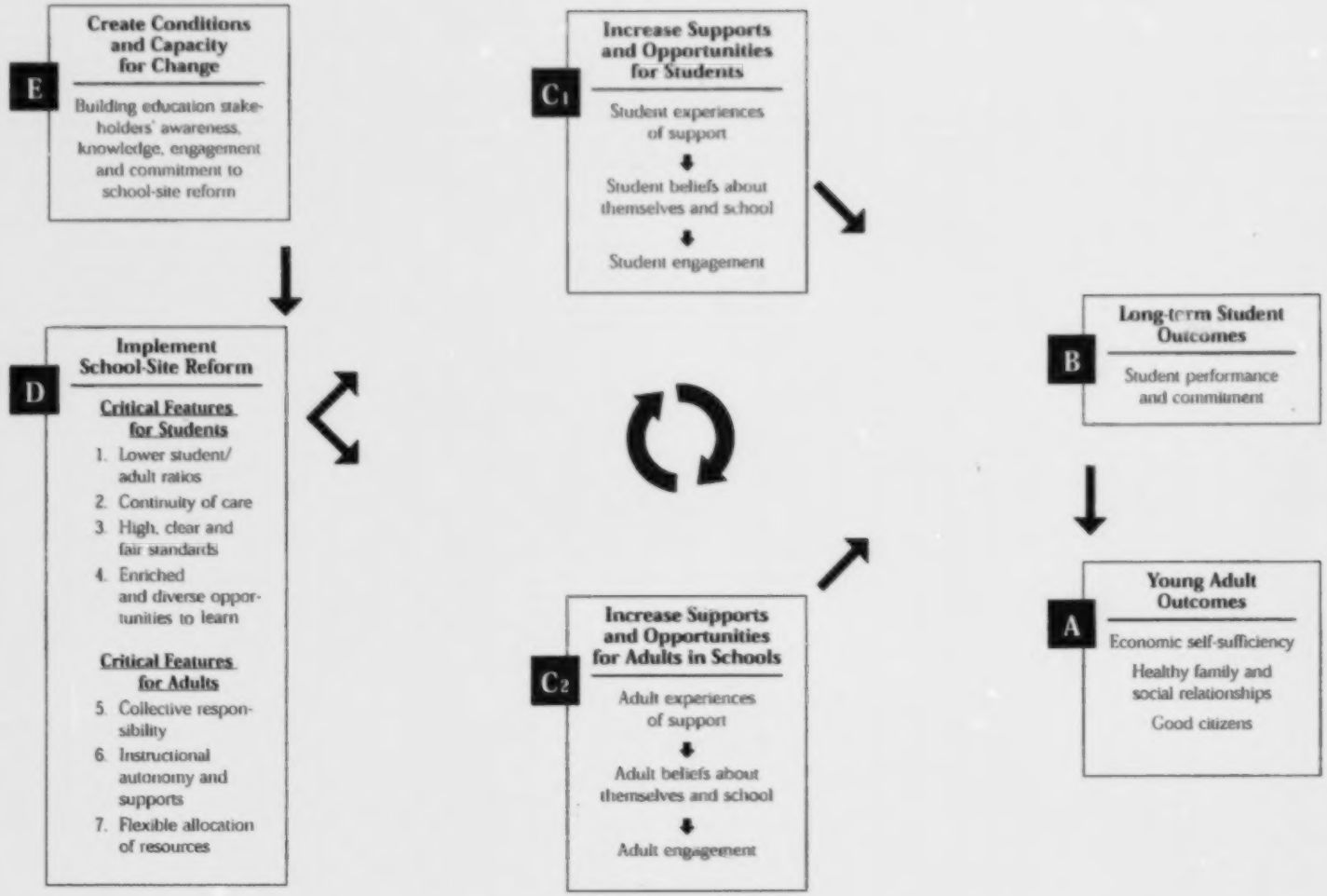
FIGURE 1

First Things First School Reform Theory of Change



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predict the adult outcomes in the framework are: how well students do in school academically (e.g., performance on standardized tests, grades) and how committed they are to their education (e.g., attendance, suspensions, expulsions) (Box B, Figure 1). These outcomes are included as the focus of educational systems undergoing change because of their association with later success.

- *Box C: What supports and opportunities improve educational outcomes?*

According to the framework, significant changes in the education environment are required in order to improve student performance and commitment. Specifically, changes must occur in the everyday lives of students in their classrooms and schools. Students should experience better interpersonal and instructional supports, which in turn lead to more positive beliefs and greater engagement in school (Box C1, Figure 1). For these student changes to occur, schools and Districts need simultaneously to increase supports and opportunities for the adults in schools, which leads to more positive beliefs and greater engagement on the part of these adults (Box C2, Figure 1). The theory holds that as the experience of these supports and opportunities are strengthened, educational outcomes can be expected to improve.

- *Box D: How should schools change in order to increase supports and opportunities?*

In order to improve the teaching and learning environment of all classrooms, the framework calls for four types of change for students and three for adults. These changes are referred to as First Things First's "seven critical features" of school-site reform (Box D, Figure 1). These critical features provide the parameters for change activities that are called for in the framework to better support youth and adults. They represent the intermediate outcomes that, if achieved, signal progress toward improving educational supports and opportunities and, ultimately, toward achieving the desired educational and long-term outcomes for youth. They are listed here because of their centrality to all of the consensus building, capacity-building and planning activities of the initiative that are the focus of this report.

Seven Critical Features of School-Site Reform[2]

FOR STUDENTS:

Structural Critical Features

1. **Lower student/adult ratios** to no more than 15 to 1 during instruction in core academic subjects (reading and math) through redistribution of professional staff.

   Implementing this critical feature requires schools to consider how to reorganize schedules and staffing, for instance: a school might pull out rotating groups of students to attend elective courses while the remaining students participate in reading or math instruction; and/or schools might train special subject staff (art, music, PE), paraprofessionals and aides to teach reading and/or math.

2. **Provide continuity of care** by having the same group of 8 to 10 professional adults within each school level stay with the same group of no more than 120 students for extended periods of time during the school day, for at least three years in elementary school, all three years of middle school, and at least two years in high school.

[2]The following list of critical features reflects the original version used in KCK. The critical features have since been revised to reflect lessons learned in KCK.

Implementing this critical feature requires decisions about how to restructure the school. Options for continuity of care across school years include establishing Small Learning Communities (SLCs),[3] Multi-age groupings,[4] and/or Looping.[5] Options for continuity of care across the school day typically involve some form of block scheduling in which classes last longer than the traditional 48 minutes.

Instructional Critical Features

3. **Set high, clear and fair academic and conduct standards.** *Academic standards* define what all students will know and be able to do within and across key content areas by the time they leave high school and at points along the way in their school career. *Conduct standards* define how adults and students should behave; are agreed upon by adults and students; are reinforced by adults modeling positive social behaviors and attitudes; and are sustained by clear benefits for meeting, and consequences for violating, those standards.

   Implementing academic standards includes making decisions about how to align District, state and national standards so that students are successful on all three assessments; and by integrating performance standards into everyday instruction. Implementing conduct standards includes developing a protocol for identifying student and staff agreed-upon standards for behavior for all people in the building; and developing a system for identifying rewards and consequences.

4. **Provide enriched and diverse opportunities:**

   - **To learn,** by making learning more authentic (active, cooperative, integrated and real-world based);
   - **To perform,** by utilizing assessment strategies linked directly to standards that use multiple modes of learning and performance; and
   - **To be recognized,** by creating individual and collective incentives for student achievement, as well as leadership opportunities in academic and non-academic areas.

FOR ADULTS:

5. **Assure collective responsibility** by providing collective incentives and consequences for teaching teams and schools based on improvement in student performance.

   Implementing this critical feature requires staff to decide on annual targets for student performance; to establish procedures for deciding how to establish those targets; and to decide on the incentives and consequences associated with meeting or not meeting those targets. To share responsibility for meeting targets, staff need to have scheduled time to reflect together

[3]Small Learning Communities (SLCs) are also known as "schools-within-a school," "houses" or "families." Each SLC has its own group of teachers and students, and sometimes its own physical space within the school, governance system and budget.

[4]Multi age classrooms are created by combining students from different grade levels in one class regardless of age.

[5]Looping requires a teacher or team of teachers to teach the same group of students for multiple grade levels (e.g., 6th, 7th and 8th) and multiple years (between two and four).

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on student performance and work on improving instruction. Establishing a common daily planning time and common professional development activities during and outside school hours are two techniques for doing so.

6. **Provide instructional autonomy and supports** to these teams of teachers so they can develop instructional strategies that will best meet the individual and collective needs of their students.

   Implementing this critical feature involves deciding the level at which decisions about instructional practice and professional development should be made – within Small Learning Communities, grade level committees, and so on. Some issues to consider include deciding what instructional strategies to use to support students' learning; how to obtain ongoing data on students' performance to study the effects of teaching; and how to sustain this repertoire of instructional strategies. Strategies for improving instruction include using common planning time and professional development activities.

7. **Allow for flexible allocation of available resources** by teams and schools, based on instructional and interpersonal needs of students. Resources include *people* (students and staff); instructional *facilities* (on- and off-campus); instructional, planning and professional development *time*; and discretionary *funds*.

   To implement this critical feature requires deciding at what level operational decisions about resources will be made; e.g., within SLCs, grade-level committees, school-wide committees, or school-wide committees consisting of representatives from each SLC or grade-level committee. Other decisions include determining who should be responsible for hiring new teachers, creating the school schedule, and choosing whether to purchase textbooks or an interdisciplinary curriculum.

While all schools are expected to implement activities associated with these reforms, the choice of specific activities targeting the seven critical features is left to each school. The FTF framework is not considered by its designers a "program" with a fixed set of materials and training procedures. Instead, it is intended to allow schools to work through a structured process for deciding how these seven changes are going to be implemented in their site.

- *Box E: What District-wide strategies are needed to build capacity and support school improvements?*

To ensure that the change activities are implemented and sustained in schools, the District leadership (Superintendent and District leaders, union leaders and board of education) and other key community leaders are tasked with creating the conditions and building the capacity for change (Box E, Figure 1). Creating the conditions for change requires ensuring that stakeholders in the schools and the broader community understand the reform; are committed to the effort; are convinced that these changes can and will occur; believe support for the initiative exists and will continue; and believe meaningful change in student outcomes will be achieved. Building the capacity for change is the charge to the initiative's leaders to realign resources and provide supports as necessary to enable school sites to plan for, and initiate, the critical features. These are the early outcomes considered to be necessary conditions for setting the stage for successful implementation of school-site improvements.

II. The Evaluation Plan

The FTF theory of change presents a road map to guide the fashioning of activities intended to produce systemic improvements. It describes what needs to happen, while the activities designed to produce these changes are chosen by the stakeholders working to implement the reform. Because the early, intermediate and long-term outcomes are specified in the framework, internal and external stakeholders can track progress, create accountability structures and make mid-course corrections in the reform process. For this reason, evaluating the initiative's success in achieving the early outcomes is the first critical step in assessing whether the capacity-building and planning activities were successful in creating the necessary conditions for change, and for judging whether the initiative is on course.

Research studies were developed to test each component of the FTF framework as the initiative unfolded. The full complement of research studies underway is described in Figure 2. Beginning in the fall of the 1997-98 school year, two major data collection efforts were initiated to track changes in the early outcomes. The first – a qualitative process study of the strategies of the initiative leadership and the building staff – was designed to document the activities that occurred, and to capture the reactions of different stakeholders to the reform effort (Figure 2, Box E and D). Data were collected through document reviews, interviews with Central Office and building staff, and observations of FTF related activities.

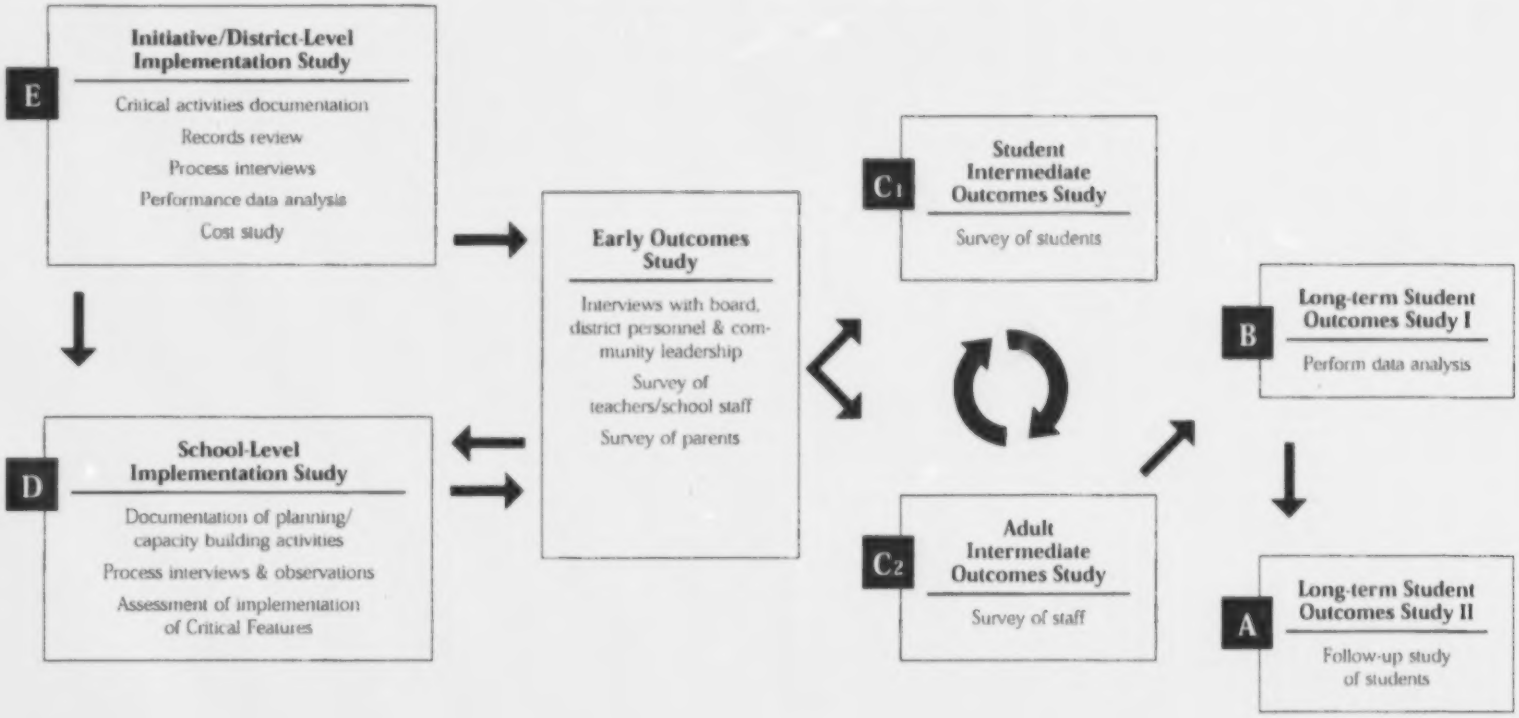
These data are used in the next two chapters to describe the partners' and buildings' early activities; are used in Chapter V to illuminate quantitative data on early outcomes; and will be used in future reports to help explain and interpret any differences in impacts on later outcomes in the theory of change (See Appendix A for a description of the First Things First Implementation Study Qualitative Methodology).

The second type of data collection around early outcomes - surveys of building staff – was designed to obtain systematic information on the key early outcomes for the purpose of tracking change over time. Surveys were conducted during key points in the first three years of implementation and the results are examined in Chapter V. The methods used to conduct these surveys are described in Appendix B.

The next two chapters describe how the initiative leaders introduced the reform and prepared the District for change (Box E) and what the buildings did to plan for implementation of the critical features (Box D). Chapter V presents the data and analyses evaluating the success of these activities in producing the early outcomes that posits as necessary for achieving the later outcomes sought by the reform. This includes an appraisal of whether the activities described in Chapters III and IV resulted in: 1) an increase in awareness of and knowledge about the school reform effort; 2) a heightened sense of urgency for, and commitment to, the initiative by key stakeholders; and 3) a sense of readiness and possibility regarding the reform.

FIGURE 2

FTF Research Studies



CHAPTER III

CREATING THE CONDITIONS AND BUILDING THE CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Preparing the Kansas City, Kansas education community for the implementation of the First Things First model and supporting the school buildings as they planned for, and started, reforms was a complex undertaking. Over the course of the four years covered in this report the research team documented the contextual conditions in the Kansas City, Kansas Public School District at the start of the reform, the activities undertaken to build the capacity for change, and the effects of these efforts on the key stakeholders in the system.

After a brief description of the demographics of the KCK District, this chapter outlines the key activities, accomplishments and challenges of moving a system to change. The scope and scale of changing an entire system, while the external context changes at the same time, precludes a presentation that details every event and nuance in the story. Instead we selected for presentation the accomplishments and challenges that, upon reflection, comprise the critical conditions that created both *pressure* for the reform and *support* for its implementation.

The narrative and charts that detail this history are organized around the following central themes:

- **Knowledge and Consensus-Building Activities** – the events and activities directed at informing key constituents about the FTF model and its implementation, and engaging them in supporting the reform. These include one of the signature strategies of the model – FTF Roundtables – that were used with stakeholders at all levels in the system. The Roundtables were crucial, since the history of school improvement and District-wide reform in KCK had been characterized by short-term efforts and upheaval without a long-term vision.
- **Key Approvals and Policy Directives** – the points where the formal adoption of FTF and related policy decisions furthered the pressure to sustain the reforms. These include critical events such as the inclusion of the FTF reforms in the court-ordered Desegregation Plan, the vote of the KCK School Board formally adopting FTF and its inclusion of support for FTF as a selection criterion for a new Superintendent, all of which helped sustain the reform through a period of key leadership changes.
- **Restructuring and Resource Allocation** – the continuing series of changes made in the deployment of District personnel and funding, and the development of new sources of funding, which signaled the high priority accorded FTF and created the supports necessary to ensure implementation. These include major restructurings of the Central Office staff and funding that began at the outset of the reform and continued throughout the period covered by this report. Also crucial was the partnership with a private funder. Together, these comprised the reform's major resources.
- **Implementation Support Activities** – the use of both external technical assistance and District-sponsored events to provide critical capacity-building at all levels in the system to support implementation of the reforms. This includes the ongoing partnership with the FTF model developer, which provided the necessary external assistance at all levels of the system, and the work of the Central Office staff assigned to support the activities in school buildings.

- **Professional Development** – one of the key types of implementation supports that enabled the involvement and training of school building staff as active participants in consensus building, planning and capacity-building activities, which required more time than is customarily available during a school year schedule.
- **Evaluation Activities and Support** – the inclusion of, and support for, a full scale evaluation of the initiative from its outset. This includes both the adoption of the research team as part of the initiative structure, and the in-kind contribution of District resources and procurement of private funding to support research.

Following a brief description of the District demographics, the remainder of this chapter describes how FTF was brought into Kansas City, Kansas, the partners involved in carrying out the initiative, and the accomplishments and challenges that reflect the central themes listed above. In order to present as much information as possible about the work done in each of these thematic areas, the key accomplishments are listed in charts with narrative description provided for only selected events or activities. The key challenges encountered and addressed in each period are described after the accomplishments are presented.

I. The Kansas City, Kansas School District

At the onset of the reform in 1996, the Kansas City, Kansas Public School District was a largely urban District serving approximately 21,000 students in 47 buildings. The District's eastern boundary is directly across the Missouri River from Kansas City, Missouri. The District has a marked economic boundary as well: the households in the western reaches of the District are more affluent than are the families in the eastern and northern segments. When the District adopted FTF as its key reform strategy, 68 percent of District students received federally subsidized lunches and about 70 percent of the students were of non-white ethnic groups. Average daily attendance was roughly 90 percent. The District's performance on standardized achievement tests was substantially below the national norm and markedly sub-standard on state standards-based assessments in all four core curricular areas – Reading, Math, Social Studies, and Science. (See Table III-1 for a summary of the District's characteristics between 1996 and 1999.)

During the first three years of the initiative, the size and demography of the student population changed most notably in the areas of ethnicity, test scores and enrollment. By 1999, the percentage of minority students increased to 74 percent principally due to increasing Hispanic and declining white enrollment. There was also a steady increase in the percentage of students scoring in the bottom quartile on the standard-

TABLE III-1 DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS	1996	1997	1998	1999
Number of Schools (High/Middle/Elem)	6/8/33	5/8/31	5/8/30	5/8/30
Total Enrollment	21399	21199	20902	20917
% Subsidized Lunch	68	66	66	68
% Minority	69	70	72	74
Average Daily Attendance	91	88	91	92
% in Bottom Quartile on Norm-Referenced Reading Achievement Test	47	51	52	54

ized reading achievement test administered in the District. Finally, the 1999-2000 academic year showed District enrollment stabilizing for the first time in three decades.

II. Introducing First Things First to Kansas City, Kansas

The partnership to undertake the FTF initiative in Kansas City, Kansas was formed in early 1996. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation (Kauffman) – a Kansas City, Missouri based national foundation supporting youth initiatives – became familiar with the Institute for Research and Reform in Education's (IRRE) education reform framework and introduced this plan for a District-wide effort to the KCK School District leadership. In the course of its work, IRRE – a Philadelphia-based, non-profit intermediary working on youth development efforts – developed a process for introducing and explaining the FTF theory of change to various education stakeholders. This familiarization process, called "Roundtables," presents the FTF theory of change by mapping the pathway to long-term outcomes; focusing on the critical features of school-site reform; and exposing participants to the realities of putting the critical features in place through presentations from school administrators, teachers and students whose schools had implemented these practices.

The KCK District leadership was invited by Kauffman in May 1996 to attend an FTF Roundtable. In an attempt to reverse the negative trend in student achievement, the KCK Superintendent had recently completed a series of efforts to create a systematic, data-driven planning and evaluation process. These efforts included participation in the new state accreditation process known as Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA), new standardized tests for students, revision and promotion of graduation requirements to support higher expectations for students, and the development of a District-wide student code of conduct. Additional efforts were being developed to enhance curriculum and instruction. After attending the Roundtable, the KCK District leadership decided that FTF could help synthesize their efforts to improve. The Kauffman Foundation agreed to entertain a joint proposal from the District and IRRE to implement FTF in Kansas City, Kansas.

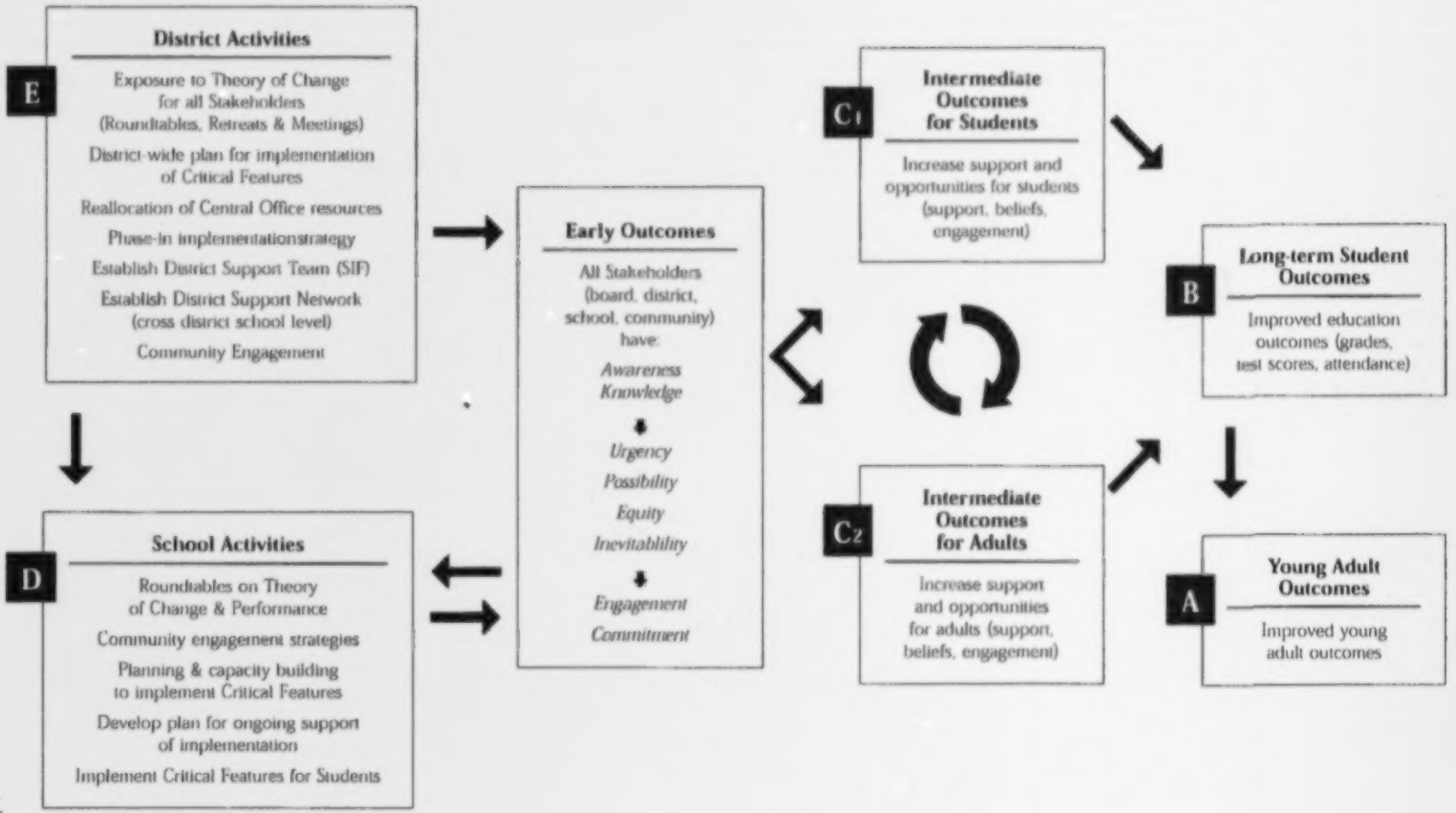
During the following summer, IRRE worked with the KCK District leadership to draft an Accountability Plan for implementing FTF, which laid out in detail the actions to be taken and the responsibilities of each partner. Meetings were held between Kauffman, the District, IRRE and School Board staff to review and discuss the plan. The product of these meetings was an agreement by the three partners to launch FTF in the Fall of 1996.

The remainder of this chapter details the key activities, accomplishments and challenges of preparation for the initiative and its first two years of planning and implementation. Together, these comprise the capacity-building activities of the FTF theory of change, shown in Boxes E and D of Figure 3. Understanding what these activities were, and how they were approached, is important because the model hypothesizes that these activities will lead to the early outcomes critical to successful implementation of FTF.

Each phase of the initiative's work between 1996 and 2000 is briefly described, followed by a table listing the timeline of key accomplishments and a description of the key challenges during that period. The accomplishments reflect the central themes described at the beginning of the chapter and are designated in the charts using the following system:

FIGURE 3

FTF Activities and Outcomes



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KEYWORD	THEME
Knowledge/Consensus	Knowledge and Consensus Building Activities
Approval/Policy	Key Approvals and Policy Directives
Restructuring/Resources	Restructuring and Resource Allocation
Support	Implementation Support Activities
PD	Professional Development
Evaluation	Evaluation Activities and Support

III. Preparing District Leadership for Change and Restructuring Central Office Resources

Between May 1996 and May 1997, District leadership participated in restructuring and planning activities to prepare for implementation of the FTF Initiative. In October 1996, a second Roundtable was held to present First Things First to the KCK Board of Education. Subsequent conversations led to Board of Education approval of FTF implementation and the submission to the Kauffman board in November 1996 of a "linked proposal" from the District and IRRE. This proposal included two key components:

1. ***Phase-In Plan.*** The District proposed to phase schools into the initiative in clusters – a high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools – to ensure that the necessary resources would be available for schools as the Central Office began reallocating its personnel and funding to support the planned changes. The first and second clusters of schools chosen for FTF implementation were selected because of their differences on key indicators such as dropout rates, graduation rates, daily attendance and student demographics. Wyandotte was identified as the first implementation cluster because the high school had the poorest performance profile in the District. Compared to the other four high schools, Wyandotte had a lower graduation rate (53%) and average daily attendance than the other high schools (<75%). It also had a predominately minority student population (82%) with almost 75 percent of its students receiving subsidized lunches.

   The Washington Cluster was identified as the second group of schools to be phased into FTF because its population was the most dissimilar from Wyandotte's. Washington High had a 76 percent graduation rate, an average daily attendance rate of 90 percent, and a 58 percent minority student population, with 41 percent of students receiving subsidized lunches. The socioeconomic difference between the Wyandotte and Washington Clusters – one urban core with high poverty and the other more suburban with relatively low poverty rates – was seen as an opportunity to learn about the process of systemic change in two areas of the community with very different histories, needs and challenges. District leaders believed that if FTF could be successfully implemented in these two very different clusters it would demonstrate that it could also be implemented in the remaining schools. The final two clusters – Harmon and Schlagle – were to be phased in one at a time in subsequent years.

   Schools in each cluster would spend one year creating plans to implement the FTF critical features and begin that implementation the following year. Wyandotte Cluster began its planning year in 1997-1998, Washington in 1998-1999. Successive years would bring the final two clusters into FTF – one cluster each year.

2. ***School Improvement Facilitators (SIFs).*** The administration reassigned District-level curriculum specialists to the position of SIF – leader of the change process in schools. This reallocation of positions created the necessary building-level support for site planning and implementation. SIFs required training in system and building-wide change, facilitation skills, team building and effective communication strategies. Concurrent with this reallocation came a streamlined curriculum department, though most SIFs maintained their duties as curriculum specialists as well.

TEXT BOX A

First Things First
Managing Bodies in Kansas City, Kansas

Executive Committee

Roles and Responsibilities

The purpose of the FTF Executive Committee is to make strategic decisions about FTF implementation, monitor progress of the initiative, and create operational plans to address barriers to successful implementation across all District Schools. In addition, the Executive Committee meets regularly with researchers to examine trends in implementation and to request information to support its own decision-making.

Members of the Executive Committee

Fall 1996: Reflecting the early informal partnership (the District, IRRE and Kauffman) the first iteration of the FTF Executive Committee consisted of:

- District Associate Superintendent;
- President of IRRE; and
- Senior Program Officer at Kauffman.

Over time, the core leadership group expanded to include:

- The Superintendent, the FTF Director of School Improvement, the two Executive Directors of School Operation and the Superintendent's Management Team, representing Professional Development, Research and Assessment, Special Education, Instructional Development, and Curriculum and Standards.

Research Management Team (RMT)

Roles and Responsibilities

The purpose of the RMT is to design, manage and disseminate findings regarding the implementation and effects of FTF in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools.

Responsibilities of the RMT include:

- Contract with independent researchers to document the implementation and effects of FTF;
- Advise the FTF Executive Committee;
- Provide additional support for data collection and analysis conducted by the District's Research and Assessment department (with the help of their consultants); and
- Prepare all official reports documenting the course of FTF in the District.

Members of the Research Management Team

Spring 1997: Shortly after the establishment of the FTF Executive Committee and upon their direction, an independent research consultant was hired to coordinate the research and evaluation activities associated with FTF. The president of Gambone & Associates, a Philadelphia, PA-based organization was selected. One Senior Research Associate from Kauffman and one from the District served with the president of Gambone & Associates as the Research Management Team (RMT).

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Following approval of the linked proposals by the Kauffman Board, the partners – the KCK District, IRRE and Kauffman – developed a three-way accountability plan, which included the creation of two managing bodies: the Executive Committee (EC) and the Research Management Team (RMT), to oversee implementation and evaluation respectively (see Text Box A for a description of these bodies). It also delineated the activities each partner agreed to accomplish over the time period covered in the plan, and spelled out the consequences associated with not completing tasks (e.g., suspension of funding). The plan outlined in great detail each step to be taken and identified the partner responsible for ensuring the completion of each step. These steps were arrived at through a decision-making process involving the three partners. The plans were updated annually, adding new tasks and responsibilities.

The clarification of roles and responsibilities in the accountability plan helped maintain external pressure on all three partners – pressure that became vital to the continuation of FTF in KCK. The plans helped the District develop a sense of accountability for developing the capacity for change as well as for improving test scores. The funder not only provided money but also participated in major events, provided in-house support from foundation departments (e.g. research and communications), and responded to the ongoing needs of the District. And IRRE became much more than the "outside expert" providing technical assistance. It worked closely with all levels in the District, from advising the Superintendent to helping school staff plan and implement the critical features. As designer of FTF, IRRE played the key role of monitoring the fidelity of local planning and implementation, and became a sounding board for local decisions that were possible distractions from the main work of reform. For example, when opportunities to apply for grants and other sources of funding arose, IRRE staff urged the District to ask: "Will this help move FTF forward or will it create additional work that doesn't fit with our vision of reform?" Over time, the District began naturally to ask that question of themselves and their partners.

As illustrated in Box 1 (identifying key accomplishments), the first year of the initiative was characterized by consensus building, securing approval from boards, building relationships among the partners and key stakeholders, disseminating information, establishing work plans and accountability mechanisms, and securing and reallocating resources to build the necessary infrastructure of change. Without this critical period of foundation-building, FTF might have been seriously challenged by both internal and external forces as the initiative proceeded.

Some of the key challenges encountered during the first year of FTF planning included:

- Securing support for FTF from external stakeholders (public, board, and leadership);
- Securing internal support to integrate FTF into the five-year District Improvement Plan as the centerpiece of the systemic change effort;
- Reallocating resources to ensure that Central Office had the capacity to lead the reform; and
- Securing the commitment of curriculum specialists to become leaders of change (as SIFs) and supporting them in their new roles.

BOX 1 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

TIME PERIOD	THEME	KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
May 1996	*Knowledge/Consensus*	□ First Roundtable held to introduce FTF to the KCK School District leaders.
Fall 1996	*Knowledge/Consensus*	□ Roundtable introduced FTF to the KCK Board of Education
	Approval/Policy	□ Board of Education approved of FTF as vehicle for school restructuring and passed a policy statement to that effect.
	Approval/Policy	□ Kauffman Board approved proposal for funds to implement FTF in KCK.
	Restructuring/Resources	□ Executive Committee formed to manage the implementation of FTF in KCK.
	Knowledge/Consensus	□ The Associate Superintendent and IRRE President met with the District Improvement Planning Committee (50-60 community members) to build community support for FTF.
	Restructuring/Resources	□ The position of School Improvement Facilitator (SIF) created by reducing the size of the curriculum department. Five SIFs selected for Wyandotte and IRRE worked with them on preparing for their new role.
	Restructuring/Resources	□ Two Central Office positions in research reallocated to new FTF-related roles in data management and assessment.
	Approval/Policy	□ School Board approved a redistricting plan involving the return to a neighborhood school concept to begin in Fall 1997. This involved creating feeder patterns from elementary to middle to high schools, and resulted in closing some schools. Each feeder pattern identified as a Cluster, used by the FTF partners to develop phase-in plan.
Spring 1997	*Support*	□ IRRE helped the District update the Board on changes, plan Roundtables and create a communication plan.
	Approval/Policy	□ IRRE, the District and Kauffman created mutually agreed upon accountability plan.
	Support	□ Kauffman Communications Department provided support in developing a communication package presenting FTF to the public.
	Evaluation	□ Kauffman agreed to provide additional grant for evaluation of the FTF Initiative.
	Evaluation	□ Gambone & Associates selected to design and manage the FTF evaluation and convened the first meeting of the Research Management Team.
	Restructuring/Resources	□ The position of Director of School Improvement created within the Central Office, reporting to the Executive Director of Curriculum Services.
	Evaluation	□ District reallocated $25,000 to support FTF survey of staff, students and parents.

IV. Reallocating Central Office Resources and Preparing for Wyandotte Cluster Planning

During the Spring and Summer of 1997, the District continued to take steps to reallocate resources and prepare principals in the Wyandotte Cluster for their planning year. Principals were given an overview of the FTF initiative and expectations for the coming year, then returned to their schools to inform staff and select school stakeholders. At the same time, IRRE introduced and built support for the FTF initiative among community stakeholder groups (e.g., teachers' union, local universities and community members). Concurrently, District leaders were crafting a Desegregation Exit Plan for Federal Court approval. After being approved by the Kauffman and School District boards, FTF was incorporated into the District's Desegregation Exit Plan as the organizing reform vehicle, and was subsequently approved by the court in August 1997. This obligated the District to carry out the specific changes called for by the model and created the legal expectation that FTF would continue eliminating the vestiges of segregation and would minimize the potential for resegregation. FTF was firmly established as the primary improvement strategy to remedy the remaining effects of segregation and substandard education in the District.

The main activities of this period are listed in Box 2.

BOX 2 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

TIME PERIOD	THEME	KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Spring-Summer 1997	*Knowledge/Consensus*	☐ Wyandotte principals received an overview of FTF and future expectations were explained. This information was shared with their staff.
	Evaluation	☐ District Research Department administered survey to all teachers in the District.
	Knowledge/Consensus	☐ IRRE initiated broader communication with stakeholder groups including the Kansas State Department of Education, local universities, National Education Association representatives and school representatives.
	Restructuring/Resources	☐ Kauffman support used for substitutes and for staff participation at Roundtables, retreats, stakeholder team meetings and work group team meetings.
	Restructuring/Resources	☐ Kauffman support used to create a SIF discretionary fund to support planning in each building.
	Restructuring/Resources	☐ Six School Improvement Facilitators (SIFs) named for the Washington Cluster to begin a training year.
	Approval/Policy	☐ The First Things First Initiative included in the District's Desegregation Exit Plan submitted to, and approved by, the Federal Court. The District was released from the court-ordered desegregation ruling and FTF became part of a legal mandate to continue eliminating the vestiges of segregation.

V. Continued Central Office Restructuring and Wyandotte Cluster Planning Year

Between August 1997 and June 1998, the Central Office continued to redefine new roles needed to support the planning year of the first cluster of 11 schools (Wyandotte Cluster) as they learned about FTF and developed their site-based plans for implementation. During this period, a number of significant contextual changes occurred.

Leadership Transitions. Between Summer 1997 and Spring 1998, a series of

leadership changes occurred in the District – critical events in the history of FTF in KCK. Board of Education elections resulted in the selection of three new Board members who were initially uninformed about FTF. The Superintendent retired in Spring 1997 and an interim Superintendent was named until a replacement was hired. There were tensions in the Central Office between those who supported elevation of the Associate Superintendent (who had been deeply involved in decisions about District participation in FTF) and those who did not. It was not until a year had passed (Spring 1998) that a new Superintendent was hired.

During this transitional year, FTF was viewed by many in the Central Office as no more than a "Superintendent's Project" that would be phased out upon the arrival of the new Superintendent. This was an understandable reaction given that, similar to most Districts, KCK had a history of reforms that came and went with each new Superintendent. Without a permanent Superintendent advocating for FTF, it appeared difficult for Central Office staff to move from their existing supervisory/monitoring roles to the supportive roles required by FTF. Worried that FTF would founder without the necessary support, Dr. Ray Daniels, the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel Services, put his name forward for the Superintendent position. In Spring 1998, the Board announced its decision to hire Daniels as Superintendent after ensuring that he would, in fact, support FTF. Shortly thereafter, the Associate Superintendent left the District and that position was subsequently eliminated.

Although the year-long leadership transition created uncertainty about the initiative's future, the partners believe several factors helped to sustain FTF during this period. First, the implementation of the accountability plan helped to keep the three partners working together on activities that moved the initiative forward. With the active involvement of IRRE's president, the interim Superintendent was able to make sure the District continued to meet the objectives stipulated by the accountability plan. Finally, the Board remained committed to implementing FTF and publicly signaled this commitment by appointing Daniels, an advocate of the reform.

While the partners worried about what they perceived to be a leadership vacuum, schools demonstrated little awareness of Central Office turmoil. During this period, the IRRE President intensified his assistance with monthly visits to each of the schools to facilitate the planning process and provide support. In so doing, IRRE applied external pressure on District and school staff to maintain the integrity of the FTF model.

Central Office Restructuring. During Spring 1998, additional changes occurred within the Central Office. With the loss of the Associate Superintendent – who had acted as the District's instructional leader – the Executive Director of Curriculum Services position was elevated to Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services to fill the void. The Director of School Improvement – a new position created in 1997 to manage the reform initiative – became the Executive Director of School Improvement, a senior level position equivalent in authority to that of the Executive Director of School Operations. The Executive Director of School Improvement now reported directly to the Superintendent, demonstrating the growing importance of the reform. While Central Office restructuring was occurring, the District and IRRE were also preparing to begin site planning in the first cluster – implementing the Roundtables for Stakeholders and Cluster Staff.

Roundtables. Two kinds of Roundtables were held for school staff to begin the planning process, Stakeholder and Cluster Roundtables (See Text Box B for a description of the Roundtable process). The Stakeholder Roundtables (held in August) differed from the Cluster Roundtables only in that they involved a smaller group of individuals from each school who then become leaders of the planning process.

Stakeholders included selected staff, administrators, community members and parents, support staff and School Improvement Facilitators. Cluster Roundtables, held approximately two months after the Stakeholder Roundtable, included the entire staff of all schools in the cluster. Among the other attendees of these Roundtables were representatives from the Central Office, the teachers' union, Board of Education, Kauffman Foundation and community members. These events were designed to introduce school staff to the FTF framework guiding the reform and to begin preparing them for their role in the change effort. Participants left these meetings with the charge to become deeply engaged in planning for the implementation of the critical features in their buildings.

TEXT BOX B

ROUNDTABLE PROCESS

AGENDA

- Presentation of the FTF theory of change showing the pathways to improved student outcomes.
- Session designed to build a sense of urgency using actual data from the School District.
  - Information is presented on the levels of attendance and test scores students must achieve in order to be confident they will graduate from high school.
  - Information is next presented on the actual percentage of students in the District who meet these attendance and performance thresholds. In urban school Districts, on average, fewer than 3 percent of high school students, 10 percent of middle school students, and 7 percent of elementary students meet the thresholds that allow confident prediction they are likely to graduate from high school.
- Presentations of what implementing the critical features means for both adults and students who currently experience them.
  - First, students talk about what a typical day at school is like for them, changes experienced as a result of the reform, including new kinds of relationships they've developed and new learning opportunities they've experienced.
  - Second, teachers and administrators talk about what a typical day at school is like for them, including experiences with team planning time, how they deal with discipline problems, new instructional strategies, challenges encountered, and changes about which they are most excited.
- Opportunities for reflection, small group discussions of the critical features, and question and answer sessions. Staff and students from schools currently implementing the critical features are distributed among these small group discussions so that they are available to answer questions.
- Sessions on group skills necessary for teamwork (e.g., active listening).
- Examination of existing resources, skill sets and needs.
- Review of a timeline for implementation.
- Creation of a vision and momentum to begin the work of school site reform.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Gain familiarity with the seven critical features of school site reform.
- Develop a common vision for what needs to change in the District schools.
- Gain an appreciation of the complexity of school change efforts.
- Better understand how to begin school change.
- Identify the skills, practices and information needed to successfully implement change.

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NEA Involvement in FTF. District leaders decided not to involve the National Education Association (NEA) in early discussions about the reform. After School Board approval of FTF as the centerpiece of the District-Wide Improvement Plan in Fall 1996, two senior District administrators met with the NEA president and the NEA liaison in Spring 1997. The NEA representatives were non-committal about the initiative and more particularly concerned about the top-down nature of the decision to adopt FTF (i.e., that teachers had not been included).

Realizing the involvement of the teachers' union would be critical in building internal support for the changes proposed by FTF, the new District leadership began looking for opportunities to partner with the NEA during the 1997-1998 academic year. In Fall 1997, a Roundtable was held for NEA school building representatives. The general tone of this meeting was positive though cautious, as some teachers expressed concern about losing contractual rights for which they had already bargained.

After the NEA Roundtable, the local NEA teacher liaison was invited – and agreed – to speak at the Wyandotte Cluster Roundtable. The local NEA chapter also brought in a national trainer to help school faculty develop skills for the collaborative planning required by FTF. Finally, at the request of the local NEA representative, senior Central Office staff attended an NEA conference in Seattle to learn more about how the NEA worked with other Districts to implement reforms. Through these interactions, the teachers' union and the District established a partnership that was a key internal support for FTF.

Leadership Institute. Throughout the 1997-1998 school year, the Kauffman Foundation collaborated with the University of Missouri-Kansas City to create a new initiative supporting the professional development of building principals. In July 1998, a group of 10 Kansas City, Kansas (KCK) principals, including the Wyandotte Cluster principals, attended the first meeting of the Institute. Principals met with their peers from Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO) and tried to address common problems in school leadership. Over the course of the next year, KCK principals and Executive Directors found that the Institute experience emphasized the major systemic problems KCMO principals were encountering. Consequently, the District requested that the Kauffman Foundation support a KCK-only version of the Institute dealing with the challenges of leadership in the context of FTF. After this revision, the Institute continued to operate as a significant professional development opportunity for building leadership in the KCK District.

Acceleration of the Phase-in Plan. During the Wyandotte planning year, some Washington Cluster schools, next in line to begin implementing FTF, started to make plans – and in some cases make changes – based upon word-of-mouth information about the reforms. For instance, some schools started to create their own definition of what Small Learning Communities were and what they should look like; create their own definition of collective responsibility; and reallocate resources based on their own priorities.

In response, the Central Office initiated monthly District Network Meetings to share accurate information about the initiative among all the clusters, and to slow down premature planning in the Washington Cluster. District leaders also saw these network meetings as a venue for highlighting the changes in the Wyandotte Cluster that were consistent with FTF, so that other schools could learn from the experiences of Wyandotte Cluster staff. For the first time, District staff gathered to communicate about the reform across clusters.

Feedback from clusters not yet implementing FTF propelled a decision to accelerate the phase-in plan. Staff in the Washington Cluster were already making structural decisions and feeling frustrated because they wanted to get started on the work. District leadership and FTF consultants decided to accelerate the phase-in plan to capitalize on this growing interest. Consequently, the Washington Cluster SIFs began working with stakeholder groups at their assigned schools in Spring 1998 rather than waiting until Fall. The acceleration plan also called for the two final clusters of schools to begin planning together in 1999. In May 1998, planning began for the Washington Cluster Roundtables.

The key activities, events and major accomplishments of this phase of planning are noted in the following table.

BOX 3 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

TIME PERIOD	THEME	KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
August 1997	*Knowledge/Consensus*	□ Wyandotte Stakeholder Roundtable held.
	Evaluation	□ Kauffman Research and Evaluation department assisted with FTF Roundtable evaluation and development of FTF research design.
Fall 1997	*****	□ WYANDOTTE PLANNING YEAR BEGAN.
	Knowledge/Consensus	□ Roundtable held for NEA school building representatives.
	Professional Development	□ Washington Cluster SIFs began a year of shadowing Wyandotte Cluster SIFs.
	Knowledge/Consensus	□ Wyandotte Cluster Roundtable held.
	Approval/Policy	□ NEA uni-serve director publicly supported FTF at Wyandotte Cluster Roundtable.
	Professional Development	□ Weekly Stakeholder Team Meetings began in Wyandotte Cluster schools to plan the restructuring process.
	Support	□ IRRE began providing technical assistance to Wyandotte Cluster, helping leadership and staff ensure that school improvement plans met the requirements of FTF.
	Support	□ On-site coaching and technical support from SIFs, IRRE instructional consultant, and the Director of School Improvement began in Wyandotte.
	Support	□ Monthly District Support Network meetings began in order to share lessons learned among District stakeholder teams - the first time cross-cluster information was shared in the District.
	Evaluation	□ Research Management Team selected study teams for implementation process study and implementation progress study.

BOX 3 *(continued)*

TIME PERIOD	THEME	KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Spring 1998	*Approval/Policy*	☐ Dr. Ray Daniels, former Assistant Superintendent of Personnel Services, hired as Superintendent of the KCK District.
	Restructuring/Resources	☐ The Associate Superintendent position eliminated; Executive Director of Curriculum Services position elevated to Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services.
	Support	☐ IRRE consultants helped Wyandotte schools with scheduling complexities.
	Professional Development	☐ A staff development day devoted by Wyandotte staff to planning FTF implementation.
	Restructuring/Resources	☐ Additional support provided by Kauffman to encourage community engagement efforts.
	Approval/Policy	☐ Wyandotte School Improvement Plans submitted to Central Office; most were approved with few changes.
	Support	☐ Washington Cluster SIFs assigned to Washington schools and began working with stakeholder groups.
	Approval/Policy	☐ All schools in the District required to set collective responsibility targets that would be integrated into a District-wide collective responsibility document.
	Resources/Support	☐ Kauffman provided additional support for instructional improvement efforts in the District.
	Evaluation	☐ Kauffman invested further in the FTF research design.
	Evaluation	☐ Rockefeller Foundation provided additional funds for two years of implementation research.
	Evaluation	☐ District Research and Assessment Department administered FTF surveys to all students, school staff and parents.
	Knowledge/Consensus	☐ Local NEA representatives and Central Office staff attended an NEA conference in Seattle.
	Restructuring/Resources	☐ Director of School Improvement position elevated to Executive Director, reporting directly to the Superintendent.
June 1998	*Professional Development*	☐ Two-day Leadership Institute held for Wyandotte principals.
	Approval/Policy	☐ The District's Collective Responsibility document approved by the School Board.

Among the major challenges facing the change effort during this period were:

- The need to maintain support for the initiative throughout the year-long leadership transitions in the District.
- The need to guide senior managers through the difficulties associated with moving from a supervisory role to a supportive role (e.g., moving from making decisions about curriculum to supporting a school's decisions about curriculum).
- The recognition that the District needed to strengthen the professional development and capacity of principals to lead the change effort in buildings. This led the District to ask the Kauffman Foundation to restructure the

existing Leadership Institute to respond to the needs of KCK principals associated with FTF.

- The need to counteract the sense of distrust of the Central Office among school staff. District leaders needed to dispel the common sentiment of "this too shall pass" and create the expectation that FTF is a long-term effort.
- The need to overcome some sensitivity among school staff to critiques offered by technical assistance consultants regarding their implementation plans.
- The need to add parent and community involvement strategies – not present in the original FTF model – to the District Improvement Plan. In response, Kauffman made more consultant support available for parent involvement strategies, and provided support and dialogue around community involvement and school-linked services.

VI. Continued Resource Reallocation and Preparing for Washington Cluster Planning

Between July and October 1998, the Central Office continued to reallocate resources to support the Wyandotte Cluster while simultaneously gearing up for the Washington Cluster's planning year. (For additional information regarding District reallocations of resources see Appendix C.) Staff in the Wyandotte Cluster participated in a five-day summer retreat during which they continued development of FTF, with the added goal of building a system for more frequent assessment and the use of data to drive curriculum planning.

Public Commitment to FTF. During this period, key stakeholders continued to demonstrate public commitment to the FTF Initiative. The Board of Education approved a plan for closing schools two hours early every Wednesday afternoon. Teachers were expected to use this time to focus on learning to enhance instruction – planning around the other critical features was to be accomplished in other time periods. The Superintendent also demonstrated his public support for the initiative in his positive responses to media reports (television and newspaper articles, letters to the editor) which presented primarily favorable, but sometimes unfavorable, information about FTF and student performance data. The Superintendent consistently responded to these reports with strong messages about the intention of the District to improve instruction and student performance.

BOX 4 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

TIME PERIOD	THEME	KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Summer 1998	*Professional Development*	☐ Up to seven days of professional development provided for all Wyandotte school staff to finalize FTF plans.
	Approval/Policy	☐ Board of Education approved early release Wednesdays.
	Knowledge/Consensus	☐ Superintendent publicly supported FTF in the press and brought together community agencies to help support early release Wednesdays.
	Professional Development	☐ Washington SIFs attended two-day training retreat.
	Professional Development	☐ 2nd Principal's Retreat for Washington principals.
	Restructuring/Resources	☐ The District Department of Evaluation, Research and Assessment expanded and the Kauffman RMT representative hired as its Director.
	Knowledge/Consensus	☐ Washington Stakeholder Roundtable held.

The major challenges the partners addressed during this period included the following:

- The FTF framework did not require specific instructional strategies for implementation; rather, it left these choices in the hands of the District and buildings. During this period, the District had not yet provided strong guidance to buildings on how to strengthen instruction. As a result, the perception arose in some buildings that IRRE did not have sufficient knowledge of instructional change and that more strategies needed to be offered for implementing this critical feature. This led to the addition of IRRE's instructional consultant to the Central Office with the intent of developing stronger guidance on the "enriched and diverse learning experiences" critical feature.
- The need to garner public, School Board and union support for increased professional development time during the school day, evenings and weekends.

VII. Continued District Support Activities, Washington Planning Year and Wyandotte Implementation Year I

By Fall 1998, many District-level resource reallocations were in place and the District focused on providing support to the two Clusters. During this time, the Superintendent established a policy designating literacy as the District's instructional focus, and work continued toward articulating the nature of instructional change needed in classrooms.

Washington Planning Year. The Washington Cluster Roundtables occurred in August and October 1998, after which Washington schools engaged in study and discussion, planning and approval of school improvement plans similar to the Wyandotte cluster's. However, the District and Washington Cluster SIFs had learned from the Wyandotte Cluster experience and decided to focus on decisions regarding structural changes sooner in the planning process. This allowed more planning time to be spent tackling difficult decisions around instructional change in classrooms not adequately addressed in Wyandotte Cluster. In December 1998, IRRE disseminated a planning guide outlining options for implementing the structural critical features (i.e., reduced ratios, continuity of care across the school day and school year). Some degree of frustration arose among Washington Cluster staff because they were the first schools to have a document in which types of implementation strategies were detailed. The general perception among staff in the Washington Cluster was that IRRE and the District were becoming less flexible about school-level design decisions. Staff in some schools felt that the implementation decisions they had made prior to receiving the planning guide were wasted effort.

At the same time that IRRE and the District were attempting to provide greater clarity about implementing the structural critical features, they also were beginning to identify a focus for instructional change: reading and literacy. This focus on literacy shaped dialogue about FTF throughout the 1998-1999 academic year.

Focus on Literacy. Recognizing that many schools were still struggling with improving instruction, and that reading is the cornerstone of all subsequent learning, the Superintendent decided to make literacy the focus of instructional improvement. He announced this decision at individual school meetings throughout the District to emphasize its importance. With this decision came the implementation of several literacy-focused support activities.

In Spring 1999, the first Literacy Summit was held for SIFs, Central Office staff and school representatives. Participants received information from nationally recognized experts about effective instructional practices. Shortly thereafter, the District identified Literacy Coaches in each school and convened monthly Literacy Academies for Literacy Coaches, building administrators, SIFs and Central Office staff. The Literacy Academies focused on identifying and training participants in the use of effective instructional strategies. The District committed to a balanced literacy approach that integrates whole-language learning with phonemic awareness; this was a dominant theme in the Literacy Academies and during portions of the Wednesday early release meetings.

As the District's focus on literacy intensified, controversy developed in the Central Office over the relative importance, resources, and attention given to different approaches to literacy. Some District educators advocated a continued focus on Balanced Literacy. Others advocated the newly implemented Just Read program – designed to increase daily reading time – and/or Second Chance, which provides intensive reading instruction to secondary students reading below grade level. Even though District leaders did not take direct action to resolve the debate, the controversy helped move the District toward a more comprehensive discussion of what good teaching and learning should look like in all classrooms, regardless of content.

Professional Development Opportunities. Between September 1998 and September 1999, several forms of technical assistance and professional development were provided to the two clusters (See Text Box C). Opportunities for professional development increased dramatically after the introduction of FTF into the District. In addition to numerous opportunities for collaborative planning through Round-tables, meetings, early release meetings and retreats, District staff had increased opportunities for instructional improvement, especially related to effective literacy instruction.

Other key accomplishments during this period are listed in Box 5 (page 32).

Key challenges the partners encountered during this period included:

- Creating the necessary resources and training support to advance the instructional focus on literacy.
- Addressing the fact that many Washington Cluster schools had begun making decisions about structural changes before participating in the knowledge-building activities designed to familiarize them with the FTF model.

VIII. Continued District Support Activities, Washington Implementation Year 1, and Wyandotte Implementation Year 2

Central Office Redistribution. By Spring 2000, virtually all Central Office departments were contributing time directly to planning for and implementing system changes in support of FTF. Yet many senior Central Office staff continued to view FTF as primarily the responsibility of the Superintendent and Executive Director of School Improvement, while they simply participated in the effort when required. To develop a sense of responsibility and accountability for FTF among all senior Central Office staff, the Superintendent instituted a major restructuring that also simplified the chain of command.

- The position of Executive Director of School Improvement was eliminated, signaling that FTF was integrated into the daily work of the District: all Central Office staff were to work in support of the changes associated with FTF.

- Two senior District positions – Executive Directors of School Operations – were replaced by two new positions – Executive Directors of Instruction – with the primary function of providing direct support to, and pressure on, principals and SIFs to implement instructional change. Each Executive Director of Instruction was given responsibility for two clusters of schools. This change created a clear chain of command, with SIFs and principals reporting to only one person.
- With instruction now under the Executive Directors, the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services was retitled Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Standards and charged with the implementation of a new standards-based curriculum.
- The position of Executive Director of Instructional Support was created to provide leadership in the District's effort to make technology available to all teachers as a tool to enhance instruction and classroom-based, data-driven decision-making.

TEXT BOX C

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITY	SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	SCHOOL STAFF	SIFs	STAKEHOLDER TEAMS
Planning and Implementing Change				
FTF Stakeholder Roundtable				X
FTF Cluster Roundtable	X	X	X	X
FTF Retreats	X	X	X	X
Weekly Stakeholder Team Meetings				X
Workgroup Team Meetings	X	X	X	
District Support Network Meetings				X
Bi-weekly Voluntary Group Discussions with Stakeholder Team	X	X	X	
Quarterly SIF Retreats			X	
New SIF Training Retreat			X	
Instructional Improvement				
On Site Coaching/TA	X	X	X	X
Weekly Early Release Meetings	X	X	X	
Training on New Curriculum/Standards	X	X	X	
Training on New Instructional Models	X	X	X	
Literacy Academy	X		X	
New Teacher's Mentor Program		X		
New Principal's Leadership Academy	X			
Annual FTF Principal's Retreat	X			
Travel to Exemplary Schools	X	X	X	X
Travel to Professional Conferences	X	X	X	X
Monthly Principal's Network Meeting	X			

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BOX 5 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS		
TIME PERIOD	**THEME**	**KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS**
Fall 1998	*****	☐ WYANDOTTE IMPLEMENTATION YEAR I BEGAN.
	*****	☐ WASHINGTON CLUSTER PLANNING YEAR BEGAN.
	Knowledge/Consensus	☐ Washington Cluster Roundtable held.
	Approval/Policy	☐ Literacy defined by the Superintendent as the new District-wide focus.
	Development	☐ Weekly Stakeholder Team Meetings began in Washington.
	Restructuring/Resources	☐ The position of Director of Instructional Improvement created within the District and an IRRE instruction consultant hired to fill it.
	Support	☐ IRRE provided technical assistance to Washington schools to develop School Improvement Plans consistent with the critical features.
	Support	☐ District Support Network meetings for stakeholders to learn from each other began in Washington.
	Support	☐ On-site coaching and technical support from SIFs, Director of Instructional Improvement, and Executive Director of School Improvement began in Washington Cluster.
	Support	☐ IRRE consultant helped Washington schools with scheduling complexities.
	Support	☐ Director of Instructional Improvement attended to literacy committee meetings, and planned quarterly literacy summit meetings.
	Professional	☐ Development/Support Monthly principal network meetings began.
	Support	☐ IRRE distributed a planning guide on implementing the structural critical features to the Washington Cluster.
Spring 1999	*Professional Development*	☐ Washington staff used a staff development day to plan for FTF implementation.
	Professional Development	☐ First Literacy Summit occurred at which Central Office, SIFs and school literacy leaders learned about high quality literacy instruction.
	Evaluation	☐ The District Department of Evaluation, Research and Assessment administered FTF surveys to all students, school staff and a representative sample of parents in the District.
Summer 1999	*Professional Development*	☐ Up to five days of professional development provided to all Washington Cluster staff to finalize implementation of FTF in their buildings.
	Professional Development	☐ Literacy Academies created to train school literacy leaders to help improve literacy instruction.

- Finally, to represent the increased emphasis on community engagement, the position of Assistant Superintendent of Student and Parent Services was retitled Assistant Superintendent of Pupil, Parent and Community Services. Under his auspices, the position of Coordinator of Parent and Community Programs was created.

Responsiveness of Central Office. Some schools registered concern about the level of support and responsiveness of some Central Office staff. In particular, problems with the computer system hurt the image of the Central Office and created logistic bottlenecks to ensuring school access to necessary data. Frequent "crashes" and other difficulties experienced with the newly installed District-wide computer system (SASI) caused great frustration. Problems with technology were so widespread that they colored many building level staff's perceptions of the overall helpfulness of the Central Office, as well as parents' impressions of the efficiency and responsiveness of individual schools. The personnel office was sometimes seen as inflexible in its response to creative attempts to solve shortage problems (e.g., barriers to reclassifying a position so that a staff member could assume a new set of duties needed to implement a school's FTF plan). Likewise, the budgeting office was considered inflexible at times. On the other hand, special education and library services were singled out as being particularly helpful as participants tried to meet their resource needs and address the literacy initiative.

OERI Grant. In Fall 1999, IRRE and Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) received a grant from the Office of Research and Educational Improvement (OERI) to expand FTF to several additional sites. The new grant brought a range of benefits to the FTF Initiative in KCK. Resources were made available to advance the focus on literacy instruction in the District. KCK staff were asked to participate in Roundtables for the potential expansion sites and provide information to potential FTF Districts. KCK staff roles shifted from reform novices to that of reform experts providing advice and insights.

While the KCK District enjoyed benefits from the OERI grant, this grant did sometimes create distractions. Because the president of IRRE spent more time and energy pulling together instructional plans and mobilizing work in KCK for use in both the District and the expansion sites, he had less time to devote to the Washington Cluster buildings in their first year of implementation. And while no individual in KCK spent a significant amount of time working with expansion sites, participating in advisory activities did divert some Central Office staff time from directly supporting the reform needs of buildings.

The fourth year of the initiative was characterized by a new round of restructuring and resource reallocation to more deeply integrate FTF into the District. Half the schools were now implementing FTF and the remaining half were beginning to plan their reform. Senior Central Office staff continued to study how to better meet the goals of the initiative by improving teaching and learning in all their schools. A concerted effort was undertaken by both the District and the SIFs to develop an instructional guide to define clearly what high quality teaching and learning should look like. By Spring 2000, the guide – known as the Teaching and Learning Document – was completed and the District began to consider how to roll it out to all schools. The challenge of reforming instructional practice entered a new phase.

Box 6 lists the key activities, events and major accomplishments during this period.

Major challenges encountered during this period included:

- The need to respond to increasing teacher turnover throughout the District. The teacher shortages occurring nationwide were also evident in the KCK schools. Furthermore, no mechanism existed to educate new teachers and staff about FTF. Most schools did not implement systematic efforts to orient new teachers either to general FTF concepts or to the specific school's FTF plan.
- The need to reallocate funding due to reductions in Title I and state-allocated money as a result of declining enrollment across the District. Some schools lost teaching positions and were forced to reorganize to continue to meet the structural requirements of FTF.

BOX 6 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

TIME PERIOD	THEME	KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Fall 1999	*****	□ IMPLEMENTATION YEAR I BEGAN IN THE WASHINGTON CLUSTER.
	*****	□ IMPLEMENTATION YEAR II BEGAN IN THE WYANDOTTE CLUSTER.
	Knowledge/Consensus	□ Implementation strategies for increased parent involvement developed by IRRE leadership, District leadership and school-site representatives.
	Evaluation	□ Research Management Team provided feedback from evaluation data to District leaders and buildings to support planning and early implementation.
	Knowledge/Consensus	□ NEA representatives and the District's Management Team met to discuss what high quality teaching and learning should look like and to create a plan to engage staff to create an informed guide for teaching and learning.
	Support	□ Teaching and Learning Instruction Guide developed.
	Restructuring/Resources	□ IRRE, partnered with MDRC, received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (OERI) to expand implementation of FTF to several additional sites.
Spring 2000		□ KCK Central Office staff, building staff and students participated in OERI expansion site Roundtables.
	Restructuring/Resources	□ Major restructuring of senior Central Office staff positions.
	Evaluation	□ District Department of Evaluation, Research and Assessment administered FTF surveys to all students, school staff, and a representative sample of parents in the District.

IX. Summary

The launching of FTF in Kansas City, Kansas began with the formation of a partnership among the School District leadership, the model designer/technical assistance provider, and a private funder. For the year preceding the involvement of school buildings in reform, the FTF partners engaged in a variety of preparatory activities. These stage-setting activities included securing the support of the key District policymakers and leaders; jointly developing a plan for implementation and a system of accountability; reallocating existing District financial and personnel resources to lead reform; and securing additional funds to fill the gaps in resources needed to begin implementation.

As all three partners worked to prepare and support Central Office staff in their roles as leaders of the reform, they also turned their attention to preparing the school buildings for change. These efforts included disseminating information about the FTF model through written materials; the creation of a template for buildings to use as they created their local plans for implementing the Critical Features; the preparation of "stakeholder" teams in each building to plan professional development opportunities when the need arose; and ongoing support for the building staff from the School Improvement Facilitators.

These are the key activities intended to produce the early outcomes believed to be necessary conditions for successful reform. We will turn in Chapter V to an assessment of whether these activities were effective in achieving these goals. But, first, Chapter IV describes the early efforts at reform from the buildings' perspective. This chapter also describes the different contextual factors that colored the buildings' planning experience as well as their start at implementation. We expect these factors to be increasingly important as implementation proceeds.

CHAPTER IV

PLANNING FOR CHANGE AT THE BUILDING LEVEL

Schools in each cluster were given one year to develop their plans for implementation of FTF. The initiative leadership provided guidelines for the planning process, reinforced through the activities of School Improvement Facilitators (SIFs) at the building level. These guidelines were:

- In the spring before the first planning year, principals were given the FTF White Paper,[6] outlining the critical features and presenting the rationale for FTF; principals were asked to share the White Paper with staff.
- Also in the spring, principals were asked to create a process to select Stakeholders – i.e., leaders in the school who would serve as facilitators of the planning process. SIFs began working with Stakeholder groups in the late spring.
- In August before the beginning of the school year, the District held a Stakeholders' Roundtable, intended to inform staff about FTF and build enthusiasm for its features through evidence of their effectiveness in other schools, and to launch Stakeholders into their roles in facilitating planning. Stakeholder Teams then began planning for the larger Cluster Roundtable.
- In October, the Cluster Roundtable was held, again presenting the rationale for FTF and testimony of its effectiveness – this time for all building staff. These events also included Stakeholder-led planning sessions for each school's activities in the coming year.
- From October through May, Stakeholder Committees met regularly. School staff joined committees – in elementary schools, the staff were organized around the seven critical features; in secondary schools (or some of the larger elementary schools), they were organized around committees such as Small Learning Communities, staffing, budget, facilities, administrative support and time use, professional development, and community engagement. In most schools, all staff participated in at least one committee.
- Committees engaged in planning and decision-making around each of the critical features.
- In April and May, buildings drafted their school improvement plans.
- In the summer before the first year of implementation, schools had a week of in-service and planning time to prepare themselves for the launch of FTF in their buildings.

These broad guidelines served as the "skeleton" for the planning process. While schools generally followed the guidelines, there was room for variation in the details of the approaches taken. In the following sections we discuss variations observed in the Wyandotte and Washington Clusters. The purpose of this discussion is to identify general patterns or factors in variations of the planning approach that may have influenced the degree of participants' "readiness" or acceptance of FTF.

[6] This paper by IIRE, *First Things First. A Framework for Successful School-site Reform (1996)* explains the FTF approach.

I. Variations in District-Level Activities with Clusters

There were some differences in the approaches taken by District and IRRE staff to working with the Wyandotte Cluster during the first planning year, and with the Washington Cluster's planning in the following year. In some cases these differences were codified (e.g., a written planning guide was available to the Washington Cluster). In other cases the variations were more the natural product of leadership by people who had already experienced one year of planning and who had a series of "lessons learned" to apply in the second year. Some of these differences might be expected to lead to differences in acceptance of FTF by the two Clusters, and are briefly described here.

More Explicit, Written Guidelines for Washington Cluster. In the second year of working with buildings, IRRE produced two planning documents, motivated in part by Wyandotte Cluster's planning experiences, and in part by the partners' desire to provide more explicit guidance on the meaning of the critical features in order to prevent buildings from developing plans that might ultimately be judged unacceptable. In Fall 1998, a brief planning guide was distributed with guidelines for buildings about developing work groups and processes for decision-making. At the beginning of the winter semester, a second document was released, providing clarification of the meaning of and acceptable criteria for the structural critical features. The timing of the release of this second planning guide was such that some Washington Cluster schools felt that progress they believed they had made in planning before that date was being rejected. Also, there was a general perception among these Washington Cluster schools that they were being given less flexibility in their planning processes.

Greater Information and Awareness of FTF for Washington Cluster Prior to Planning. Throughout the first planning year, monthly after-school information exchange sessions were held to provide staff throughout the District with information and training related to planning for FTF. Stakeholders in the Wyandotte Cluster described their experiences, thus supplementing the informal exchanges among principals and staff about the progress of planning in the Wyandotte Cluster. On the one hand, some interview respondents thought these formal and informal exchanges led to greater efficiency and enthusiasm about both planning and implementing FTF. On the other hand, some schools exhibited a "we're different" factor: a deliberate choice to be different from their counterparts in the Wyandotte Cluster.

Leadership Differences Between Wyandotte and Washington Cluster. The Executive Directors in the two Clusters had very different leadership styles. The Wyandotte Cluster Executive Director took a "hands-on" approach with principals and was present at every District-wide event and many building level meetings. The Washington Cluster Executive Director tended to delegate more to principals and was physically present less often in this Cluster's schools. Further, SIFs for Washington Cluster were selected early and were able to shadow Wyandotte SIFs during the Wyandotte Planning Year, as well as to begin preparations for the Washington Roundtables. Two of the Washington Cluster SIFs had previous experience and training in facilitation skills, and two had, as part of their previous Central Office duties, the responsibility to train first-year teachers. These additional opportunities and experiences suggest that Washington SIFs might have had greater facilitation and consultation skills that would be helpful in working with building level staff.

Resource Differences Between Wyandotte and Washington Cluster. Wyandotte Cluster schools had access to more flexible resources, due to the availability of Title I support, for which all Wyandotte Cluster schools are eligible. In the Washington

Cluster, Title I support was available only for the elementary schools. Further, at the time of planning, six of the Wyandotte Cluster schools had sought and received outside funds and grants for special projects. Virtually none of the Washington Cluster schools mentioned outside funding as a potential resource for FTF implementation.

II. Variations in Contextual Characteristics of Schools

Historical Factors and Demographics

The historical experiences of the school, demographic makeup, and other concurrently occurring factors demanding the staff's attention, form the context in which each school approached the tasks of planning and implementing FTF. The different combinations of these factors contributed to a unique experience of FTF in each school. These factors are described below.

School size. Smaller schools tended to take more informal approaches to planning, and more often used consensus-building as their method of reaching decisions. The smallest schools did not form committees but, rather, considered all the changes to be made as a committee of the whole. In larger schools, not all faculty were on a committee, or at regularly attended committee meetings. Larger schools used more formal methods of gathering information, such as written needs assessments distributed to all the staff.

Redistricting, school closures and changes in student demographics. In some schools, catchment boundaries were redrawn either immediately prior to, or during, the planning year. This was especially significant in schools where redistricting produced greater numbers of low-income, minority students. In 12 of the 20 schools in the Washington and Wyandotte Clusters, the number of Hispanic students increased as the number of Hispanic families in the District grew. The staff were learning how to relate to these students and coping with their own (lower) expectations of these non-English-speaking learners, while at the same time being confronted through FTF with expectations for greater accountability among themselves and higher standards for the students. In the five "western edge" elementary schools in Washington Cluster, where redistricting had resulted in significantly higher minority student populations, interviews suggested staff were skeptical about the abilities of their new students and less open to implementing FTF for them.

In some schools, other events were occurring that may have served as distractions to the planning process. For example, two Wyandotte elementary schools were being merged and a new building was under construction during the planning year and first year of FTF implementation. This merger also affected other schools. One took on a temporarily larger enrollment to accommodate some of the students displaced during the construction year; two other schools were engaged in planning implementation of a science and math magnet-school format at the same time they were planning for FTF.

Previous experience with school reform. Some District leaders interviewed during the first planning year (1997-98) predicted that previous attempts to implement other models of school reform (e.g., Comer Model, Basic Schools) would make the staff of those schools less willing to participate in FTF. It was felt these staff would have an attitude that "this too shall pass," and would believe the District would not stay the course with FTF. This may have been true in a few cases. However, observations suggest that, on the whole, staff who had some experience with other school reform efforts (most of which had characteristics similar to some FTF critical

features) tended to be more enthusiastic about embracing at least those features with which they were familiar. For example, schools that were already looping, team teaching or engaged in multi-age groupings liked the results and were very supportive of the continuity of care critical feature. Schools with a previous history with the Comer Model or Basic Schools were able to make connections with that experience and incorporate those principles into their FTF plan.

Variations in Leadership Styles

Principal leadership styles. Central Office interview respondents agreed that the leadership abilities of principals would be critical to the acceptance and successful implementation of FTF at the building level. The results of interviews with building staff suggest they were correct. Especially in schools where the principal was seen as a strong instructional leader, FTF was supported. In those schools, the conversations observed and the tone of interview responses tended to be on-task and to focus on content (e.g., study groups reading and discussing instructional techniques), rather than on discussions of problems, barriers or other negative topics. The qualities of those principals who were identified as strong leaders appeared to include several distinguishing characteristics:

- The leader demonstrates to staff that s/he cares about them, is willing to go to bat for their interests, and respects their commitment and/or competence;
- The leader is highly visible and participates fully in training, teaching and implementation of change;
- The leader evidences knowledge of what is going on; and
- Communication is open and direct (no going through chains of command), and the leader is seen as being willing to listen.

SIF leadership and facilitation skills. During the planning and first implementation years for Wyandotte and Washington Clusters, School Improvement Facilitators were considered to be representatives of the Central Office. Most of the original SIFs came from the ranks of Curriculum Specialists, i.e., they were Central Office staff with expertise in specific curriculum areas. Some had previous training and experience in facilitating planning and training; some had been principals. All of these previous experiences led to variations in the quality of facilitation and instructional expertise the SIFs brought to the buildings. Their ability to win the trust of principals and staff appeared to influence building staff's perceptions of the supportiveness of the Central Office. SIFs who were described by respondents as more effective appeared to have several distinguishing characteristics:

- Prior training and experience in group facilitation and in-service training or personnel development;
- Willingness to "pitch in" or "make themselves useful" to the principal and the staff; in particular, by modeling instructional methods;
- Responsiveness to staff concerns and having access to a variety of resources to solve issues or surmount barriers.

Variations in Organizational Climate

A positive organizational climate as a feature of any business or human service organization has a bearing on the willingness of the members of that organization to embrace new initiatives. Certainly, the quality of the leadership of principals is

strongly associated with a positive organizational climate. However, the makeup of staff also contributes. A negative organizational climate may affect the planning and implementation process by inserting additional considerations or constraints into the process, for example:

- In a poor organizational climate, the planning process took into consideration the "need" to accommodate factions, cliques and subgroups that were in conflict. For example, in one school the first grade was omitted from the looping structure because no one wanted to work with one of the first grade teachers.
- Schools with poor organizational climates were characterized by discord among the staff and/or between principal and staff; this led to much time spent in planning meetings "venting" negative feelings rather than engaging in on-task behavior.
- Schools with poor organizational climates tended to have high staff turnover; therefore, there was a constant need to orient new people to the school's FTF plan.

Variations in the Planning Process

Variations in the planning process itself might be considered outcomes of the pre-existing conditions described above. Different approaches were used for choosing and organizing Stakeholders, developing the structure of committees, and the processes used for decision-making as schools developed their plans.

Selection of stakeholders. Most principals announced the initiative in staff meetings, provided the timetable for the planning process, and announced that there would be a Stakeholder Committee of representatives of the school to facilitate the planning.

In only four schools (all in the Wyandotte Cluster), did the principal appoint Stakeholder Committees him/herself. The remaining schools solicited volunteers. These principals said they influenced the volunteer pool based on their perceived need to balance representation by ethnic group, grade level, etc. In most cases this meant soliciting participation beyond those who had initially volunteered. In a few cases, the principal had more volunteers than needed, and had to select from among them for the final committee membership. The degree to which this was accepted as equitable depended on the degree to which the staff generally perceived their principal's decisions as consistent and fair. For example, in one elementary and one secondary school, a number of volunteers for the Stakeholder committee initially felt very enthusiastic about the initiative. When the principal selected a smaller number of committee members, the staff felt betrayed and attributed the choices to favoritism. This perception of unfairness inhibited a smooth planning process.

In most schools, the Stakeholder committees met weekly, at first to plan the Round-table, and later to monitor the progress of planning.

Planning Committee makeup. In eight schools, planning committees were organized around the critical features, usually one committee per feature. In some of the smaller schools, committees were assigned planning for two or three features apiece. In three small schools, the staff did not break up into separate committees, but considered the planning topics (organized by critical feature) as a whole.

In the remaining schools, work groups were organized based on recommendations in the planning guidelines. This meant four to six work groups, depending on

the size of the school, with groups assigned one or more tasks related to budget, facilities, professional development, small learning communities, staffing, community engagement and supportive programs.

In the majority of schools, Stakeholders chaired the planning work groups or critical feature committees; in a few schools, the members of the work group/committee selected a chairperson from among themselves.

Decision-making processes. In some schools, there was much early discussion about the schedule for planning group meetings, a loaded issue because the meetings usually had to be held either before or after school. Some staff, especially those with young children at home, found it very difficult to arrange schedules for these meetings. For smaller schools, where the meetings could be incorporated as part of regular staff meetings, this was less problematic.

With facilitation by the SIF and the Stakeholders, each committee followed a similar pattern: to research the issue related to the given topic, to make decisions, and to bring the recommendations back to the whole staff. Research generally involved reading articles related to the topic (e.g., literature on looping); most of these materials were provided by the SIF, some by committee members. Stakeholder teams from all six of the secondary schools were able to travel to New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania to tour other schools implementing the critical features. A number of Washington Cluster school teams also visited their counterparts in Wyandotte Cluster to see how their decisions around the structural critical features were working. Finally, some individual committees within schools distributed formal needs/resource assessment questionnaires to the whole staff on various topics (e.g., staff development needs, team preferences).

According to respondents, actual decisions about how the critical features were to be implemented were most often made by a vote of the faculty. In seven of the smaller schools, decisions were made through a consensus-building process. Most respondents, in talking about the decision-making processes, appeared to agree that decisions on details of the plan had been in their hands.

It is difficult to assess just how many final decisions were actually influenced by the SIF and/or the principal. One principal, for example, was described by the SIF as being very manipulative; in her opinion, the staff was "pre-programmed" to make the decisions he had in mind. SIFs also may have influenced the decision-making process since, typically, the SIF was the person who actually wrote the FTF School Improvement Plan. Interviews with the SIFs suggest that insertion of their own ideas into the plans may have varied with their differing perceptions of the nature of their roles. At one end of the continuum of influence, SIFs described their work as reflecting the consensus of the school staff, and advocating for the staff to get the resources they needed. At the other end of this continuum, SIFs described being considerably more directive in developing the plans and inserting their own ideas. Most SIFs fell between these extremes, and influenced decisions more subtly (e.g., through providing research-related articles about best practices).

Variations in Plans[7]

Many schools in the two Clusters have a number of strategies in common for implementing each of the critical features. Yet there are some variations in approach

[7]The nature of the decisions made during planning reflects the process as it occurred in Kansas City. The FTF model has been revised to incorporate some of the lessons from this experience. Consequently, the current structure of building plans and the process for creating plans is somewhat different in new FTF sites.

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to some of the features that reflect historical and contextual differences in these schools. The following sections describe the general tendencies of the plans for each critical feature and offer possible explanations for differences. The purpose of analyzing the initially developed plans is to identify indicators that may shed light on the staff's acceptance of FTF and their readiness to change.

Lower student/adult ratios. The task here was to decide how to structure the school to achieve a 15:1 student/adult ratio during the core instructional periods (i.e., reading and math).

Elementary Schools. All 14 elementary schools in the two Clusters proposed to use "special" teachers (PE, music and art teachers, special education staff), support staff, and aides or paraprofessionals during a designated core instructional time for reading and math. The Wyandotte Cluster approaches generally entailed adding these adults to the classrooms to lower ratios during core instruction. Schools in the Washington Cluster added these adults to the classrooms but also used different strategies for grouping students during reading and math instruction (e.g., leveled reading groups[8] or multi-aged groups).[9] The difference in the approaches may be due to (a) the more specific guidelines introduced by the District in 1998, and (b) the introduction in 1998 of the Literacy initiative with its emphasis on leveled instruction, and early release professional development times. Both of these developments occurred after the plans for Wyandotte Cluster had been written.

Secondary Schools. The secondary schools used two primary strategies for achieving lower adult/student ratios. Two Wyandotte schools used block scheduling of core instruction within Small Learning Communities (SLCs). The remaining schools implemented a "power hour" or skillbuilders' class, taught by all staff during block times. A variety of non-core staff, volunteers and other staff supplemented core instructional staff during these block times. All six secondary schools also proposed the use of special subject teachers (e.g., art, music, PE), non-core instructional staff, administrators and community volunteers during core instructional time.

Continuity of care. The task here was to decide how to reorganize the school to allow a smaller group of students to have contact with a small number of adults for longer periods of each day and for more than one year. During the Wyandotte planning year, there was no explicit requirement to develop SLCs; however, almost all schools chose that option. In the Washington Cluster, planning guidelines required development of SLCs.

Elementary Schools. All but one of the elementary schools organized some form of SLC, referred to in their plans as "Houses" or "Families." Of those schools with SLCs, all but one organized them with at least one classroom for kindergarten through fifth grade. All but three of the elementary schools chose some form of looping. One school was organized in multi-age groupings, while a second used multi-age grouping for only one of its SLCs. Finally, two schools did not propose to loop, but rather to engage in team teaching with teachers in the grade levels above/below them.

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[8]Leveled reading instruction involves matching the content of the work (e.g., reading text) to the child's instructional level. This type of instruction is believed to be the most effective form of literacy instruction.

[9]Multi-aged groups place students of the same instructional level together regardless of age. In some cases, multi-aged instructional groups will place higher and lower skilled students together so that they can learn from each other.

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Secondary Schools. Students were assigned to SLCs in all secondary schools. In Wyandotte High School, students could choose from among theme-based houses; in one Wyandotte middle school and both Washington Cluster middle schools, assignments were based on balancing gender and ethnicity. In Washington High School and the second Wyandotte middle school, the Houses were organized by grade level (upper versus lower level divisions in the high school; 6th, 7th and 8th grade Houses at the middle school). In Wyandotte High School and all four middle schools, students were to be in contact with the same team of teachers for their entire time in the school (e.g., four years in the high school and three years in the middle school). In Washington High School two-year looping was proposed (e.g., students stayed with the same team of teachers for grades 9 and 10 and then had a new team of teachers for 11th and 12th grade).

High, clear and fair academic and behavior standards. The decisions to be made here concerned how to establish and maintain standards for academic performance and behavior. Some schools interpreted this as adopting the District policies and benchmarks for their own school; others interpreted it to mean developing mechanisms to create clear and consistent standards that students understand.

Elementary Schools. There was little variation in this feature. All but two schools refer to the District's Academic Standards and Benchmarks in their plans; all but four refer to the District Code of conduct, and all 14 elementary schools embrace the Cooperative Discipline approach[10]. Two schools describe the use of formative assessments[11] to set daily goals and instruction. And two schools mention the "Building Behavior Rubric" and/or the use of a Recovery Room (e.g., time-out room) for students with behavior problems. (These two schools have the same SIF.)

Secondary Schools. All six schools mention adherence to the District Academic Standards and Benchmarks, but only four of the six mention use of the District Code of Conduct. Procedures are specified for setting individualized standards within SLCs and for using methods such as instructional themes and assessment in two schools (Wyandotte High School and one Washington middle school).

Enriched and diverse learning opportunities. The nature of this task was interpreted very differently in the Wyandotte and Washington Clusters.

Elementary Schools. All but three elementary schools approached this feature, in part, by describing a variety of learning activities, special programs or other initiatives in their school designed to enhance students' learning experiences. Beyond that commonality, two interesting patterns emerged. First, all but one of the Wyandotte Cluster schools selected the Dimensions of Learning Framework[12] as their basis for this critical feature, while only one Washington Cluster school did so. A possible explanation for this difference may be that the Dimensions of Learning Framework was espoused by an instructional committee under the leadership of the

[10]The Cooperative Discipline approach to conduct standards relies on everyone in the community applying the same standards, expectations and known consequences.

[11]Formative assessment is an *ungraded* assessment used to provide students and teachers with feedback about each student's understanding of the curriculum to date.

[12]Dimensions of Learning is an instructional framework developed by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) that identifies key elements of teaching and learning.

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former Associate Superintendent; several of the participants in that District-level committee later became Wyandotte Cluster SIFs. Second, more of the Washington Cluster schools described such approaches as Balanced Literacy, multiple intelligence approaches[13], and recognition of student achievements (e.g., publicly acknowledging increases in student performance).

Secondary Schools. All but one of the secondary school plans mentioned staff professional development as one of their proposed tools for enriching learning opportunities. In addition, three interpreted this feature to mean more activities and experiences for students (e.g., portfolios, technology, interaction with the community).

Collective responsibility. Here the question was how to designate responsibility and accountability among all members of the staff for the performance of all students.

Elementary Schools. Almost all Wyandotte Cluster schools interpreted this feature to mean that they were expected to state their achievement goals. Their interpretation is likely due to the fact that the Wyandotte schools chose to use their school improvement plans to fulfill their Title I planning requirement (which requires the specification of goals for student mprovement). In contrast, the Washington Cluster planners interpreted this critical feature in two distinct ways:

1. create a comprehensive curriculum/assessment system that logically connects content across grade levels and informs instruction across grade levels. This was done so that staff have awareness of what is required to be successful at the next grade level;

2. create mechanisms for coordinating the curriculum across disciplines within small learning communities where inter-disciplinary planning occurs. This interpretation may be a function of the more explicit planning guidelines provided to Washington Cluster schools in 1998.

Four schools also added peer coaching or "buddy" systems for staff as a means to achieve collective responsibility. Three schools included parents and/or students in this feature by specifying that they would be given clearer ideas of their responsibilities. Lastly, one Washington Cluster school stated that it "already has" a sense of collective responsibility.

Secondary Schools. All but two (the two Washington Cluster middle schools) designated SLC members as responsible for assessing and setting student goals. To facilitate that, mechanisms were specified for SLCs to have time for planning. Beyond that, a variety of unique strategies was mentioned (e.g., whole-school goal setting by the Site Council, reference to standards and benchmarks, and collective instructional duties during Power Hour).[14]

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[13]Multiple intelligence approaches to instruction take into consideration the idea that, in addition to intellectual aptitude, every individual has different kinds of abilities through which he or she learns. Teachers can take these abilities into consideration during instruction to maximize learning.

[14]PowerHour is a reading and math intervention in which, every two weeks, a student has five extra instructional days in addition to normal daily reading and math instruction. The interventions are leveled so that ability and instructional content are matched. Student/adult ratios are often 10:1 or less.

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Instructional autonomy and supports. The questions to be addressed here involved how to develop mechanisms to assure that decisions about instruction and support needs are in the hands of teachers.

> *Elementary Schools.* Ten schools specified that primary instructional decisions were to be made in SLCs; four specified making decisions in grade-level teams. Coordination across SLCs for some school-wide planning was specified in three schools. All the Washington Cluster schools and two Wyandotte Cluster schools also interpreted this feature to mean that professional development is responsive to teacher-expressed needs, and/or laid out mechanisms for determining those in-service needs. Three schools specified that decisions were to be based on individual student needs. Finally, one Wyandotte school noted that Instructional Autonomy means "having a sense of empowerment and inclusion in planning"; there was no explanation of how teacher empowerment was to be operationalized.
>
> *Secondary Schools.* This feature varied little among the secondary schools. All stated that decisions about instruction were to be made within SLCs; four described staff input in professional development plans (also to be developed within SLCs). One school described staff participation on school wide committees (e.g., Budget) as part of Instructional Autonomy. (Note: Other schools established school-wide committees, but elected to describe these under Flexible Allocation of Resources.)

Flexible allocation of resources. This feature involved specification of ways to make flexible decisions about the level and use of resources.

> *Elementary Schools.* Six of the seven Wyandotte Cluster schools specified in their plans that SLCs were to have the discretion to plan use of space and schedules; none of the Washington Cluster schools made this statement despite the fact that all these schools were divided into SLCs. Seven schools have some type of representation on school-wide budget, hiring, staff development or other committees.
>
> *Secondary Schools.* All six of the secondary schools stated that SLCs would have their own budgets for materials and staff development. Wyandotte High School and one Wyandotte middle school also stated that each SLC would have its own physical space and discretion over assignment of that space. All the Washington Cluster secondary schools, and the other Wyandotte middle school, specified that SLCs were to make their own decisions about staff assignments. All the Wyandotte Cluster schools, but none of the Washington Cluster secondary schools, stated that representatives from SLCs were to sit on school-wide committees.

As the schools moved through their planning year and the first year of implementation, the evaluation tracked the extent to which building staff appeared to be developing a belief in the need for reforms, a commitment to ensuring the reforms would happen, and a sense of being prepared to make these changes. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

EFFECTIVENESS OF DISTRICT ACTIVITIES IN ACHIEVING THE EARLY OUTCOMES OF FIRST THINGS FIRST

As the initiative leadership carried out its work preparing for and supporting reform, and as the buildings moved through planning and early implementation, the research teams collected data to track the effects of these activities on the early outcomes specified in the FTF theory of change (listed in Figure 3). Interviews and observations provided a qualitative appraisal of how Stakeholders were approaching – and reacting to – the activities of the reform; and staff survey data provided quantitative assessments of the degree to which the initiative activities moved the District toward the intended early outcomes of the reform.

The signal events in the District for creating the capacity and conditions for change (i.e., achieving the early outcomes) were the Cluster Roundtables, the supported planning process and creation of building implementation plans, and support for the beginning of implementation. Accordingly, the staff surveys were planned around the timing of these events. Data were collected in the spring prior to the planning year, immediately following the Cluster Roundtables (Fall), at the end of the planning year (Spring) and again at the end of the first year of implementation (Spring). (See Appendix B for a description of survey methods, measures and response rates.)

This chapter examines the FTF early outcomes, exploring patterns of similarities and differences in these outcomes across the levels within a cluster (i.e., elementary, middle and high); and between the first two implementation clusters (Wyandotte and Washington).

The theory of change posits that the early outcomes – awareness and knowledge of the reform, a sense of urgency to change, commitment to the initiative by all stakeholders, a sense of readiness to do the work, and a belief that the reform is possible – are *necessary* in order to implement and sustain improvements system-wide. Unlike other pathways in the model, the linkages between these early outcomes and later outcomes (e.g., high-quality implementation) are not firmly rooted in a strong research literature. While many agree that system stakeholders need to "buy-in" to a reform, feel supported in their efforts to change, and believe reform can be accomplished, no strong research base about system change exists to demonstrate either how to create these conditions, or that when these conditions are present initiatives are more likely to be successful.

The research on this initiative presents an opportunity to systematically test these links. This chapter presents the first assessment of these connections in the FTF model by examining the extent to which the initiative strategies appear to have created these conditions in Kansas City, Kansas. Future reports will examine the linkage between these conditions (or early outcomes) and the level and quality of implementation.

Detailed results for each of the early outcomes are presented in each section of the chapter, with a summary of the key findings about each outcome included at the end of each section. Readers who wish to skip over the detailed findings can go directly to each summary of key findings.

I. The Process of Examining Cluster-Level Early Outcomes

The analyses of early outcomes data allow us to assess the overall effect of the strategies used by the District and its partners to ensure that building staff were prepared for and committed to the reforms they were tasked with implementing. These are the conditions hypothesized in the FTF model to be prerequisites to successful future implementation. The activities and opportunities provided by the initiative leaders during planning and early implementation were meant to be consistent district-wide. Staff at all levels in both clusters were exposed to the events described in the previous two chapters to prepare them for planning and implementation. The District also laid out a template for building activities and provided common supports to assist the schools in creating and implementing their plans. Therefore, the first evidence of whether these strategies were effective should be detectable *changes* in the early outcomes when *all staff* in a cluster are considered together.

The data for each cluster are considered separately here because each planned and implemented FTF in different years, creating the possibility that historical events in the District may have had different effects on staff in each cluster.

As the initiative proceeds it will become important to consider whether the early outcomes were achieved by smaller groupings of staff – those in each individual building – because every building came to the process with its own history and configuration of strengths and weaknesses. In later reports, the early outcomes at the building level will be used as predictors of implementation quality, testing the FTF hypothesis that achieving these outcomes lays the groundwork for implementing the comprehensive reforms.[15]

The Time Period. The effects of initiative activities on early outcomes were measured over a two-year period. The first measure of an outcome presented is either a baseline measure from the spring preceding the planning year, or from the early fall (October) of the planning year.[16] The change in early outcomes is then followed through the planning year to the end of the first year of implementation. The early outcomes are tracked through the first year of implementation because the longer trend presents a more accurate picture of the course of change; reform is neither a smooth nor evenly paced process for those experiencing it. Beliefs and opinions sometimes take time to change – positively or negatively – and are sometimes volatile. In some cases they also appear to have been affected differently by the process of planning for change than by the start-up of actually implementing changes. This phenomenon will be apparent when the two years of data are examined.

The Effects. For this report, the effectiveness of the strategies used to inform and engage staff in the reform is assessed in two ways. First, we examine whether there was any change in staff knowledge and beliefs about the reform over the course

[15]It is worth noting that the building level trends in early outcomes were examined, and the Cluster-level trends reported here are mostly reflective of those building trends.

[16]There is some variation in which survey data are used as the baseline measure due to the difference in availability of data in the two Clusters. Since Wyandotte was the first Cluster to undergo reform it was not possible to field an entirely new staff survey measuring all FTF outcomes in the spring prior to their planning year (Spring 1997). So for the first Cluster, only selected questions about FTF were included in the spring survey prior to their planning year. Therefore, selected questions about other key early outcomes were included in the questionnaires completed at the conclusion of the Roundtable event (fall of the planning year) in order to have the earliest possible measure for the Wyandotte Cluster and to enable comparisons between Wyandotte and other Clusters. In order to look at comparable trends across the two Clusters for these questions, we use the post-Roundtable measures for both Clusters (fall of the planning year) as the starting point and show the effects of the planning process that followed the Roundtable event. Where notable trends exist in the Washington Cluster when the pre-planning year data (Spring 1998) are compared to the post-Roundtable data (Fall 1998), these data are presented.

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of the activities undertaken in the District. The standard used for assessing change is movement of 10 percentage points or more (either upward or downward) in the proportion of staff who exhibited the most positive levels on early outcomes. This degree of change represents meaningful movement on the measures included here.[17]

Next we assess whether enough change occurred to indicate that capacity-building strategies were successful in creating the conditions necessary for the reform to move forward. In other words, over the course of the District's work, did enough change occur in staff's attitudes and beliefs to create an overall environment of support for and commitment to this reform? To assess whether this occurred we used a benchmark – or threshold – of two-thirds of the staff exhibiting the most positive levels on early outcomes as the criterion for having a "critical mass" of staff supporting, and ready for, the reform. Since a review of the literature on school reform yielded no evidence on the levels of early staff support required to predict later success in implementation, we chose two-thirds as a reasonable threshold because it represents the point where supporters of reform clearly outnumber resisters.[18]

II. Assessing Awareness and Knowledge of FTF

The first step in the FTF theory of change is informing participants about the effort and ensuring they are knowledgeable about the changes they are expected to implement. Many of the early initiative activities described in Chapters III and IV were directed toward this end (e.g., Administrators' meetings, the White Paper, the Roundtables). The survey data show that the strategies used by the partners were effective in "getting the word out" to all staff in the Wyandotte and Washington Clusters. These early outcomes both increased by meaningful amounts, and reached levels where the majority of staff were both aware of and knowledgeable about the FTF initiative.

Awareness. Chart V-1 shows the growth in *awareness* achieved in these clusters. This graph shows only data for the Washington Cluster because data were not available prior to the planning year for the Wyandotte Cluster. In the spring prior to their planning year, between 20 percent and 30 percent of Washington Cluster staff, in buildings at all three levels (high (H)[19] middle (M) and elementary (E)) were "very aware"[20] of the FTF initiative. By the end of the planning year between 60 and 65 percent of secondary school staff (H and M) and nearly 70 percent of elementary school staff (E) reported being "very aware" of the effort.

The graph on Chart V-2 shows that the threshold of two-thirds (marked by the vertical line at 66%) had been crossed by schools at all levels – in both clusters – with nearly 80 percent of staff being "very aware" of FTF by the end of the first year of implementation.

Knowledge. The trends in *knowledge* about the FTF initiative follow a pattern similar to that of awareness. We first examined whether the Roundtable itself

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[17]Significance levels are not reported in the data tables and graphs in this report because the data do not conform to the assumptions that underlie statistical testing stemming from the use of samples (We have populations and not samples in these analyses). However, if these data were from samples, using the most stringent assumptions (independent samples, two-tailed test) differences of between 6 percent and 11 percent would be significant. Therefore, we use 10 percent as both a substantively and statistically meaningful level of change.

[18]In order to refine this threshold for future research, we will empirically validate what level of achievement on early outcomes is associated with later success in implementation.

[19]Because each Cluster has only one high school, the data presented in the Cluster analyses for this level is actually building level data.

[20]This category is defined as the highest two points on a seven-point scale.

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CHART V-1

AWARENESS OF THE FTF INITIATIVE
Washington Cluster:
Change in Percent of Staff Who Are "Very Aware"
Pre-Planning to End of Planning Year
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)

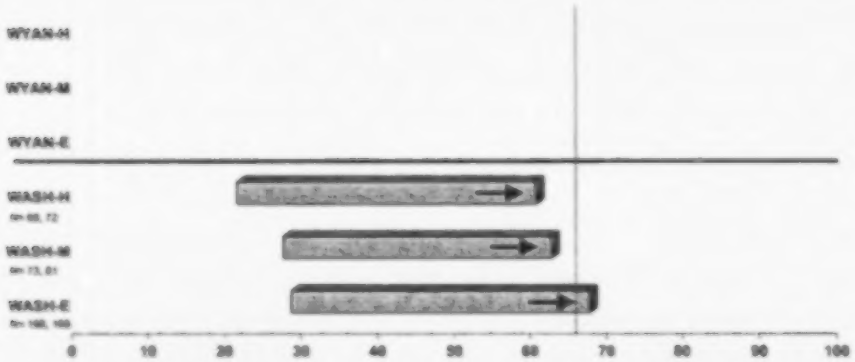
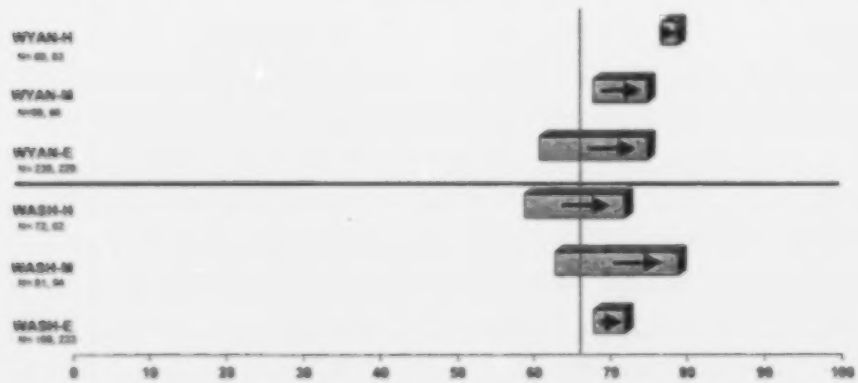


CHART V-2

AWARENESS OF THE FTF INITIATIVE
Wyandotte & Washington Clusters:
Change in Percent of Staff Who Are "Very Aware"
End of Planning Year to End of Year 1 Implementation
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)



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appeared to be an effective strategy for increasing knowledge in the Washington Cluster, since data were available for these schools on this measure from the spring survey preceding the planning year. Chart V-3 shows that following the Roundtable, increases of between 10 and 20 percent occurred in Washington Cluster staff reporting understanding FTF very well.

The graph on Chart V-4 shows that in the period from the end of the Cluster Roundtables to the end of the planning year, significant gains continued in both clusters in the proportion of staff who felt they understood the initiative "very well."[21] Between the end of the planning year and the end of Year 1 of implementation further significant increases in this outcome occurred and, ultimately, staff generally crossed the two-thirds threshold in feeling knowledgeable in both clusters (see Chart V-5). The only exception was the Washington elementary schools' staff. The average proportion of staff at this level who understood FTF very well stayed below the two-thirds threshold even after the first year of implementation (about 60%).

In order to explore the areas in which these staff felt less knowledgeable, we reviewed data on knowledge of the individual critical features of school-site reform (see Box D, Figure 1 for list). The majority of Washington Cluster elementary staff felt well informed about the student critical features; it was the *adult* critical features where levels on this outcome were slightly below the two-thirds threshold – most notably "flexible allocation of resources." This particular critical feature was also well understood by the fewest staff in the other Washington Cluster levels (middle and high) and in the Wyandotte middle schools. Qualitative data indicate that staff were not sure what this critical feature would entail, and some continued to be skeptical about whether the Central Office and building principals would, in fact, allow staff to have control over resources.

*The **key findings** regarding **awareness and knowledge** are:*

- Overall, District activities appear to have been effective in achieving widespread awareness and knowledge of the FTF reform. The proportions of staff at the highest level on these outcomes increased significantly over both the planning year and first year of implementation. As a result, more than two-thirds of the staff in both clusters reported high levels of awareness and understanding of the initiative.
- The only exception was in the Washington Cluster elementary schools. While the staff at this level made great gains in understanding the initiative, they did not quite reach the threshold of two-thirds reporting the highest level of overall understanding. Further analysis shows this lack of understanding was concentrated around flexible allocation of resources.

III. Assessing A Sense of Urgency and Commitment to FTF

According to the FTF theory of change, in order to create the conditions for change, once staff are knowledgeable about the reform they must next believe change will result in better outcomes for students (urgency) and be committed to implementing the reforms. Table V-1 (Wyandotte Cluster) and Table V-2 (Washington Cluster) illustrate the amount of change that occurred in the first two years of the initiative in staff's beliefs about each of the critical features of school-site reform.

[21]This category is defined as the highest two points on a seven-point scale.

CHART V-3

KNOWLEDGE OF ALL SEVEN CRITICAL FEATURES
Washington Cluster:
Change in Percent of Staff Who Understand "Very Well"
Pre-Planning to Post-Roundtable
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)

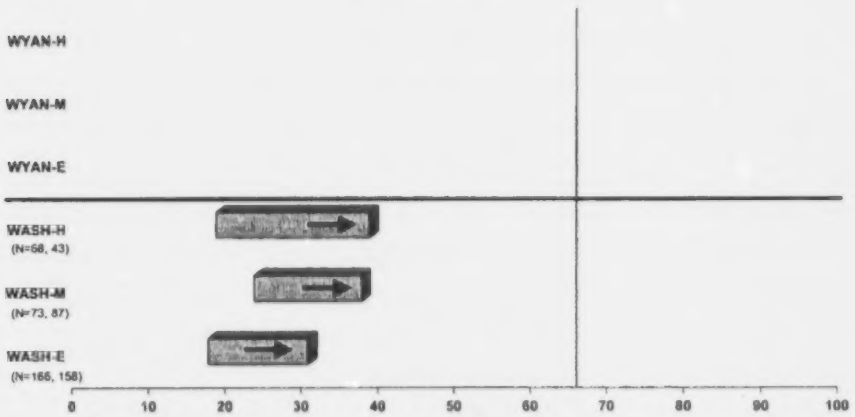
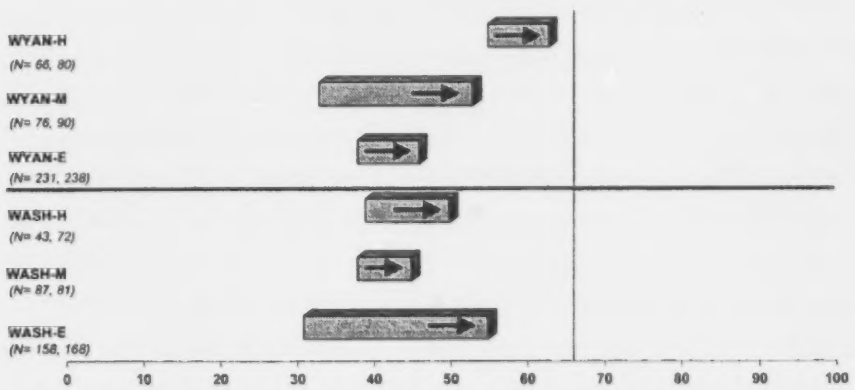


CHART V-4

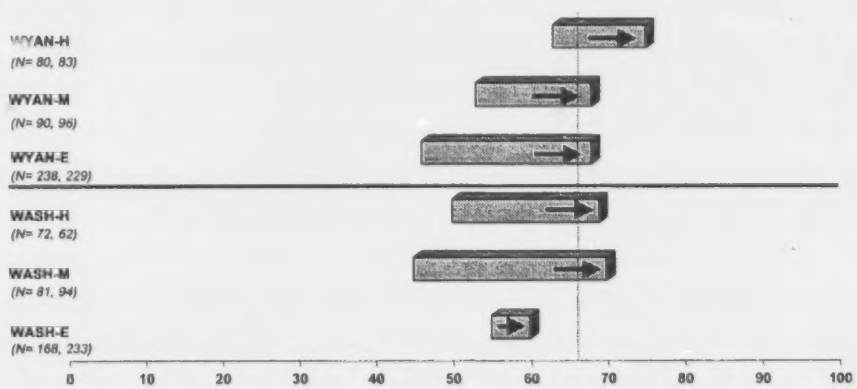
KNOWLEDGE OF ALL SEVEN CRITICAL FEATURES
Wyandotte & Washington Clusters:
Change in Percent of Staff Who Understand "Very Well"
Post-Roundtable to End of Planning Year
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)



Urgency. The first column in Table V-1 and V-2 shows changes in staff's sense of urgency about each critical feature; i.e., the belief that each of these changes "would help" or "is essential" to improving students' outcomes. A review of the critical features of standards (academic and behavioral),[22] enriched opportunities to learn and instructional autonomy show that not much change occurred during the two-year period because, for the most part, staff's sense of urgency about these elements had already reached a "ceiling" where 90 percent or more believed these changes were necessary. Under these conditions no meaningful positive change is possible. Lowering student-adult ratios was also considered urgent by 90 percent or more of staff (with Washington High School being the only exception; the percent of staff here was high, but had not reached a ceiling effect). In fact, a review of the first columns in Tables V-3 and V-4 shows that at all levels, in both clusters, the threshold of two-thirds of staff believing these reforms were necessary was reached or surpassed. This pattern shows that from the outset of the reform, staff believed – and continued to believe – that the reforms most directly associated with classroom teaching (ratios, standards, enriched instructional opportunities and instructional autonomy) were urgent if student achievement were to improve.

CHART V-5

KNOWLEDGE OF ALL SEVEN CRITICAL FEATURES
Wyandotte & Washington Clusters:
Change in Percent of Staff Who Understand "Very Well"
End of Planning Year to End of Year 1 Implementation
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)



[22]The FIT surveys included separate questions about these two standards – academic and behavioral – in order to allow staff to respond separately to these two issues. In the remaining analyses, these two dimensions of standards will be treated separately.

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TABLE V-1

EFFECTS OF PLANNING YEAR AND YEAR 1 IMPLEMENTATION: CHANGES IN CRITICAL FEATURE BELIEFS

WYANDOTTE CLUSTER Fall 1997-Spring 1999

		URGENCY		PERSONAL COMMITMENT		COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT	
		PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1	PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1	PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1
RATIOS	H	***	***	↓			
	M	↑	***			↑	
	E	***	***	↑	↓		
CONTINUITY: DAYS	H					↑	
	M						↑
	E					↑	↑
CONTINUITY: YEARS	H	↑	***	↑		↑	
	M	↑	↑	↑	↑		↑
	E	↑		↑		↑	↑
CONDUCT STANDARDS	H	***	***	***			↓
	M	***	***	***	***		***
	E	***	***	***	***		
ACADEMIC STANDARDS	H	***	***	***			↓
	M	***	***		***		
	E	***	***	***	***		
ENRICHED OPPORTUNITIES	H	***	***	***	***		↓
	M	***	***		***		
	E	***	***	***	***		
INSTRUCTIONAL AUTONOMY	H	***	***	***	***		
	M	↑	***		***	↑	***
	E	***	***	***	***		
COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY	H	↑	***			↑	↓
	M	↑		↑		↑	↑
	E	↑	***				
FLEXIBLE ALLOCATION	H	***	***				
	M		↑		↑	↓	↑
	E			↓			

↑ / ↓ = 10 percentage points or more change *** = score of 90% or higher

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TABLE V-2

EFFECTS OF PLANNING YEAR AND YEAR 1 IMPLEMENTATION: CHANGES IN CRITICAL FEATURE BELIEFS

WASHINGTON CLUSTER SPRING 1998-SPRING 2000

		URGENCY		PERSONAL COMMITMENT		COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT	
		PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1	PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1	PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1
RATIOS	H	↑		↓			
	M	***	***				
	E	***	***			↑	
CONTINUITY: DAYS	H	↑		↑		↑	↓
	M	↑		↑			
	E	↑		↑		↑	
CONTINUITY: YEARS	H	↑		↑		↑	↓
	M	↑		↑		↑	
	E	↑		↑		↑	
CONDUCT STANDARDS	H	***	***	***	↑		
	M	***	***	***	***	***	
	E	***	***	***	***		
ACADEMIC STANDARDS	H	***	***				
	M	***	***				
	E	***	***	***	***		
ENRICHED OPPORTUNITIES	H						
	M	***	***				↓
	E	***	***		***		
INSTRUCTIONAL AUTONOMY	H	***	***			↑	↓
	M	***	***		↑		
	E	***	***				
COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY	H	↑		↑		↑	↓
	M		***		↑		
	E		***	↑		↑	
FLEXIBLE ALLOCATION	H				↑	↑	
	M						
	E		***			↑	

↑ / ↓ = 10 percentage points or more change *** = score of 90% or higher

TABLE V-3

EFFECTS OF PLANNING YEAR AND YEAR 1 IMPLEMENTATION: MEETING THRESHOLDS ON CRITICAL FEATURE BELIEFS

WYANDOTTE CLUSTER SPRING 1998 – SPRING 1999

		URGENCY		PERSONAL COMMITMENT		COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT	
		PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1	PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1	PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1
RATIOS	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦
CONTINUITY: DAYS	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦		
	E	♦	♦		♦		
CONTINUITY: YEARS	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦		♦		♦
	E	♦	♦				
CONDUCT STANDARDS	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
ACADEMIC STANDARDS	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
ENRICHED OPPORTUNITIES	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
INSTRUCTIONAL AUTONOMY	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	
FLEXIBLE ALLOCATION	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦		♦		♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦

♦ = 2/3 or more of staff report high commitment/urgency

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TABLE V-4

EFFECTS OF PLANNING YEAR AND YEAR 1 IMPLEMENTATION: MEETING THRESHOLDS ON CRITICAL FEATURE BELIEFS

WASHINGTON CLUSTER SPRING 1999 - SPRING 2000

		URGENCY		PERSONAL COMMITMENT		COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT	
		PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1	PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1	PRE PLANNING TO END OF PLANNING	END OF PLANNING TO END OF YEAR 1
RATIOS	H	♦	♦				
	M	♦	♦				
	E	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦
CONTINUITY: DAYS	H	♦					
	M	♦	♦				
	E	♦	♦	♦			
CONTINUITY: YEARS	H	♦	♦				
	M	♦	♦				
	E	♦	♦				
CONDUCT STANDARDS	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
ACADEMIC STANDARDS	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
ENRICHED OPPORTUNITIES	H	♦	♦	♦	♦		
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
INSTRUCTIONAL AUTONOMY	H	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	M	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY	H	♦	♦	♦			
	M	♦	♦		♦		♦
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
FLEXIBLE ALLOCATION	H	♦	♦		♦		
	M	♦	♦			♦	
	E	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦

♦ = 2/3 or more of staff report high commitment/urgency

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The sense of urgency about the need for the other structural reforms – providing *continuity of care across school days and across years*[23] – was not felt as universally at the outset of the initiative (see Column 1, Tables V-1 and V-2). Neither of these reforms was seen as essential by 90 percent or more of the staff (ceiling) during the two years of study. However, the planning year activities did result in significant increases in both clusters of 10 percent or more in the percent of staff believing changes around continuity across school years would help their students. This was also true for continuity across the school day in the Washington Cluster schools. But, again, an examination of the urgency columns in Tables V-3 and V-4 for continuity of care across the day and years shows that the two-thirds threshold was met or exceeded by staff at all levels in both clusters. The only exception was Washington High School for continuity across the day after one year of implementation, which nearly met the threshold: 64 percent of its staff described this critical feature as urgent.

Responses about the urgency of *collective responsibility* as a feature of reform (Tables V-1 and V-2) show that significant increases occurred for most staff, and/or staff reached a ceiling effect on proportions feeling this change was urgent. All levels of staff in both clusters reached or exceeded the two-thirds threshold supporting this change (Tables V-3 and V-4).

The responses about *flexible allocation of resources* show fewer increases or ceiling effects across both clusters than in any of the other critical features – especially in the Washington Cluster. This is consistent with the trend in the data about understanding this critical feature. Yet two-thirds or more of staff at all levels in both clusters believed this reform would improve student outcomes (Tables V-3 and V-4). It appears that while staff believed this reform was needed, they were less certain about what it would entail, or perhaps skeptical that it would occur.

*The **key findings** regarding staff's sense of **urgency** about the critical features of school-site reform are:*

- Overall, the majority of staff – at all levels in both clusters – felt the reforms of FTF would improve their students' school performance. For some critical features – e.g., teacher-student ratios, standards, enriched opportunities to learn and instructional autonomy – nearly all staff (90% or more) believed changes were urgent before the reform began.
- The planning year appeared to have the greatest effects on the structural critical features regarding continuity of care across school days and years. The proportions of staff in both clusters who believed these structural changes would help their students were the lowest going into the planning year. But across all levels in both clusters during the planning year, significant increases regarding a sense of urgency about these changes occurred; ultimately, by the end of the planning year, two-thirds or more of staff believed these changes would improve student outcomes.

Personal and Collective Commitment. While a sense of urgency about the critical features was clearly expressed by the end of the planning year, it is perhaps more important to examine how committed the staff felt to implementing the critical features; and how committed they believed their building colleagues were to putting

[23]The FTF surveys included separate questions about these two dimensions of continuity of care – across the school day and across school years – in order to allow staff to respond separately to these issues. In the remaining analyses, these two dimensions will be treated separately.

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these reforms in place. When considering the staff's personal commitment (the percent who felt "positive" or "enthusiastic" about implementation) and their perceptions of their colleagues' degree of commitment (the percent who felt colleagues would "support others" or "do whatever is necessary" to implement a reform), a more complex picture emerged.

Changes in these two outcomes are illustrated in Columns 2 and 3 of Tables V-1 and V-2. As with urgency, personal commitment toward implementing *academic and conduct standards, enriched opportunities to learn* and *instructional autonomy* showed little change over the two years because in many cases they were at ceiling levels of 90 percent or more (Tables V-1 and V-2). And, as with urgency, proportions of staff at all levels in both clusters reached the threshold, with two-thirds or more feeling personally committed to these critical features (Tables V-3 and V-4).

When asked about colleagues' commitment to these reforms, staff's responses about standards (academic and conduct) in general indicate a supportive environment, with all levels reaching the two-thirds threshold – with one exception. In Wyandotte High School there were significant decreases during the first year of implementation in the proportion of staff who believed their colleagues would support reforms in both academic and conduct standards. This decline resulted in the school falling just below the two-thirds threshold in Year I of implementation. This was accompanied by a decline among these staff in perceived collective commitment to implementing enriched opportunities to learn during the first year of implementation; however, this school still stayed above the two-thirds threshold. Qualitative data suggest that as this high school broke into Small Learning Communities, staff became more aware that colleagues were not evenly adopting instructional and standards improvements; this is likely responsible for the decline in perceptions about collective commitment in the first year of implementation.

A decline in perceived collective commitment to enriched instructional opportunities also occurred among the Washington middle schools' staff during the first year of implementation, resulting in a move from being over the two-thirds threshold after planning, to under the threshold after the first year of implementation. The high school level staff in Washington Cluster did not reach the two-thirds threshold in either year.

Commitment to the *structural critical features* (lowering ratios and creating continuity across the school day and years) show the starkest difference between the two clusters. Some positive and some negative change occurred in the Wyandotte Cluster over the course of planning and the first year of implementation (see Table V-1, columns 2 and 3). But by the end of Year I of implementation, staff at all levels in this cluster had passed the threshold of two-thirds being personally committed, and believing their colleagues would do what was necessary, to implement lower ratios and continuity across school years (see Table V-3).

The only exception was the Wyandotte elementary staff. While the proportion of staff personally committed and perceiving collective commitment to continuity across *school years* had risen significantly during the two year period, by the end of one year of implementation they had still not reached the threshold of two-thirds supporting this change.

In the Wyandotte Cluster, personal commitment to continuity across *school days* did not change by large amounts in either of the two years; but by the end of the planning year, two-thirds or more of staff at all levels reported they were personally committed to this change. The proportion perceiving their colleagues as committed

to this change did improve significantly during the two-year period, but did not quite meet the threshold by the end of the planning year (reached the low 60s).

The Washington Cluster data present a somewhat different picture. During the planning year, significant gains were made in the proportion of staff feeling personally committed to, and perceiving their colleagues as committed to, continuity across the school day and years (Table V-2). But overall, the staff at all levels in this cluster did not reach the threshold of either supporting personally, or believing their colleagues supported, any of the *structural critical features* – lowering ratios, creating continuity across the school day, or creating continuity across school years. The only exception is the elementary staff, who did reach this threshold regarding lowering ratios.

Qualitative data suggest this may have been due to a difference between the two clusters in the planning experience and in their cultures. The initiative leaders decided to create guidelines and a planning document for the structural critical features after the Wyandotte Clusters' planning year. Interviews suggest that staff in Washington Cluster schools perceived this as a loss of the flexibility and choice the Wyandotte schools had during their planning the prior year. Despite the fact that the planning guidelines did not really restrict their options any more than Wyandotte's informal guidelines had, this directiveness on the part of the initiative leaders (intended to smooth the planning process) may have decreased the sense of ownership and buy-in the Washington schools had toward the structural changes. Washington Cluster staff also expressed a desire to be "different" from the Wyandotte Cluster in their plans because they considered themselves "better" schools than those in Wyandotte. Because there were only a limited number of options for structuring schools that would meet the requirements of the FTF model, this attitude might have contributed to lower feelings of commitment to the structural options available to the Washington Cluster schools, since most (if not all) were already part of the Wyandotte Cluster plans.

For the final two critical features – *collective responsibility* and *flexible allocation of resources* – the proportion of staff feeling personally committed, and feeling their colleagues were committed, to these changes was, with a few exceptions, significantly increased (see Tables V-1 and V-2). But as we have seen with the other early outcomes, the Wyandotte Cluster staff met the thresholds for commitment to flexible allocation of resources, while support was scattered among the Washington staff. Across both clusters, all but the Washington High School staff met or exceeded the threshold for personally supporting collective responsibility changes. But only the middle school staff in Wyandotte, and the elementary and middle school staff in Washington met the two-thirds threshold for believing their colleagues were committed to this reform.

*The **key findings** regarding **commitment** to the critical features of school-site reform are:*

- Overall, the findings around commitment to the reform are more complicated than for urgency because these questions deal with individuals' own, and perceptions of their colleagues', willingness to change.
- Both personal commitment, and perceptions of colleagues' commitment, to changes in academic and conduct standards were either high at the outset of FTF or increased significantly during the planning and initial implementation year: staff at all levels in both clusters reached the threshold level on these critical features. The only exception was the staff

at Wyandotte High School. For this group, the proportions perceiving colleagues as committed to standards dropped during the first year of implementation, to the point where they were no longer above the threshold. This was accompanied by a drop in the collective commitment to improve enriched learning opportunities. This may be connected to the implementation of Small Learning Communities (SLCs) and the perception among staff in the first year that colleagues in these SLCs were not uniformly implementing these reforms.

- There was a stark difference between the two clusters in staff's commitment to the structural critical features. The Wyandotte Cluster recorded significant improvements in the proportion of staff feeling personally committed, and believing their colleagues were committed, to the structural reforms. This resulted in all levels either passing the two-thirds threshold for these critical features or, in the case of the elementary schools' staff, coming very near the threshold. In the Washington Cluster, while there were significant gains in both personal and collective commitment to structural changes, none of the levels' staff reached the threshold of the majority feeling personally committed to, or believing their colleagues supported, the structural reforms. The only exception was the Washington elementary staffs' commitment to lowering student-adult ratios. This might be due to the introduction of more direction regarding the structural features for this cluster.

IV. Assessing Perceptions of District Leadership Commitment to Reform

Staff's beliefs about their own and their colleagues' commitment to reform are likely to be important to successful implementation. But without a belief that District leadership is highly committed to the reform, the initiative could suffer from the perception that "this too shall pass," which creates cynicism toward reform efforts. According to the FTF theory of change, perception of general commitment to reform is an early outcome that must be achieved if implementation is to succeed.

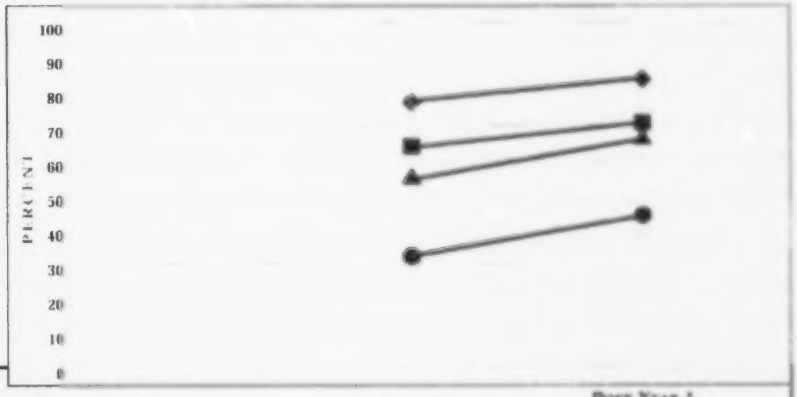
In order to assess these outcomes, data were collected on whether staff perceived other key stakeholders – the Superintendent, the Central Office staff, the School Board and their union leaders – as committed to the reform. We examined trends in the proportions of staff who perceived these stakeholders as "very committed"[24] to the reform over the two-year period of planning and early implementation. Overall, there was a pattern of significant increases in these perceptions with a few exceptions.

Chart V-6 shows the trends in perceptions of *leadership commitment* for the Wyandotte and Washington *elementary* school staff. There are no data on these variables for the Wyandotte Cluster prior to planning, so this cluster's charts have only two time points on the graph (end of planning year and end of Year I of implementation). There were significant increases in the number of staff in both clusters' elementary schools who believed these stakeholders were very committed to the reform. The two-thirds threshold is met in both clusters for beliefs about the Superintendent's and School Board's commitment by the end of Year I of implementation – and the proportions are quite high. This is most likely due to the fact that during the

[24]This category is defined as the highest two points on a seven-point scale.

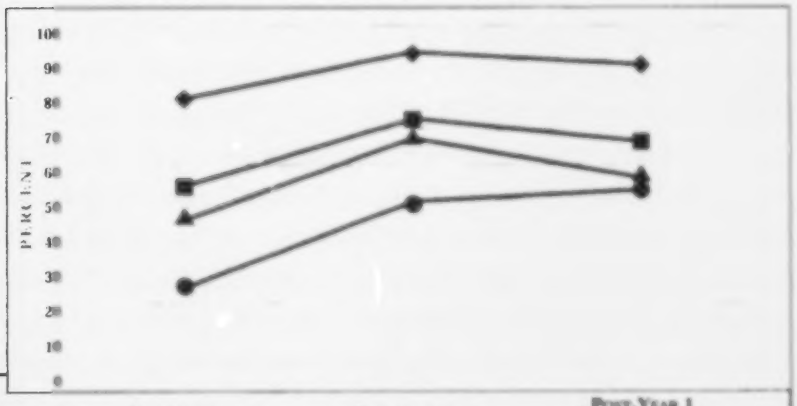
CHART V-6

STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT
Wyandotte Elementary Schools:
Percent of Staff Who Say "Very Committed"
(1998 N=238, 1999 N=231)



	Pre-Planning	Post-planning	Post-Year 1 Implementation
Superintendent		77%	84%
Central Office		55%	60%
School Board		64%	71%
Union Leaders		32%	46%

STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT
Washington Elementary Schools:
Percent of Staff Who Say "Very Committed"
(1998 N=166, 1999 N=168, 2000 N=233)



	Pre-Planning	Post-planning	Post-Year 1 Implementation
Superintendent	79%	93%	88%
Central Office	44%	67%	56%
School Board	54%	73%	67%
Union Leaders	25%	49%	52%

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Wyandotte Cluster's implementation year and the Washington Cluster's planning year, a new Superintendent was appointed by the Board – expressly because of his commitment to FTF; and to the fact that the School Board took the extraordinary step of approving the Wednesday early release time for staff to work on improving their instructional techniques.

While the Wyandotte elementary staff reached the two-thirds threshold in believing the Central Office staff were very committed to the reform, the Washington elementary staff did not. In fact, there was a reversal of a positive change in this outcome. Qualitative data suggest this decline might be connected to the low visibility of a key Central Office staff person – the Executive Director of the Cluster – in the school buildings.

The *middle school staff* in both clusters (Chart V-7) also show some significant positive gains in the proportion of staff believing the District leadership was highly committed to the initiative. Like the elementary staff, the proportion of staff at this level in both clusters had well exceeded the two-thirds threshold in the number who believed the Superintendent was highly committed to the reform. In both clusters, there were significant increases in perceptions of the union leaders' commitment to FTF, but the proportions had not yet reached the threshold level by the end of the first year of implementation. In the Wyandotte Cluster there were significant increases in the perception of Central Office staff's commitment, and the proportion reached the threshold by the end of Year I of implementation; but in Washington there was virtually no change and the proportion did not reach threshold. Finally, the Wyandotte middle school staff did reach the threshold of two-thirds believing the School Board was highly committed to the reform and the Washington staff was approaching the threshold (62%).

The data for the two *high schools* present a divergent picture (Chart V-8). While staff at this level in both clusters reached the threshold level in believing the Superintendent was very committed to the reform, there was a significant decrease among Wyandotte High School staff in this proportion over the first year of implementation. There was a similar pattern for perceptions about Central Office staff's commitment, with Wyandotte's staff's proportion falling while Washington Cluster's increased; and only Washington's staff reached the two-thirds threshold. This pattern may be attributable to the fact that some changes that the Wyandotte High School principal wanted to make in the first year of implementation were not approved by Central Office. A further difference is that the Washington High School staff show a trend of steady increases in the proportion believing the School Board was highly committed to FTF. Washington staff reached the threshold while Wyandotte staff did not.

*The **key findings** regarding staff's perceptions of key **stakeholders' commitment** to the reform are:*

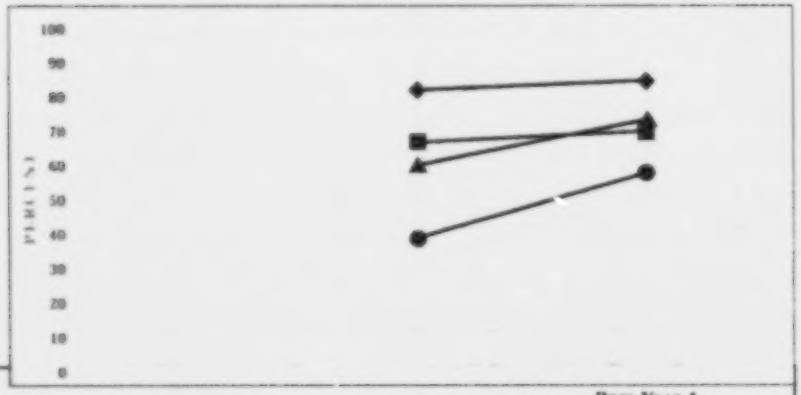
- Two-thirds or more of staff at all levels, in both clusters, believed the Superintendent was highly committed to the FTF initiative. However, this proportion did decline for the Wyandotte High School staff after the first year of implementation.
- In both clusters, two-thirds or more of staff at all levels also perceived the School Board to be highly committed to the reform – again, with the exception of the Wyandotte High School staff.
- These results are likely related to: the selection of a Superintendent committed to the FTF initiative; his public statements of support for the

CHART V-7

STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT

Wyandotte Middle Schools:
Percent of Staff Who Say "Very Committed"

(1998 N=90, 1999 N=96)

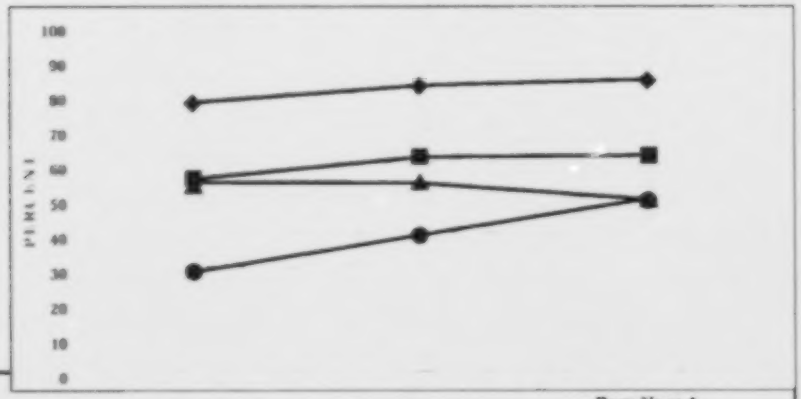


	Pre-Planning	Post-planning	Post-Year 1 Implementation
Superintendent		80%	83%
Central Office		58%	71%
School Board		65%	68%
Union Leaders		37%	56%

STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT

Washington Middle Schools:
Percent of Staff Who Say "Very Committed"

(1998 N=73, 1999 N=81, 2000 N=91)



	Pre-Planning	Post-planning	Post-Year 1 Implementation
Superintendent	77%	82%	84%
Central Office	54%	54%	49%
School Board	55%	62%	62%
Union Leaders	29%	39%	49%

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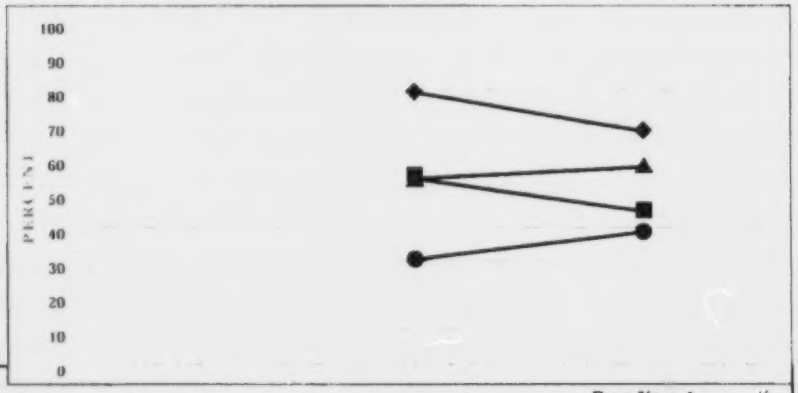
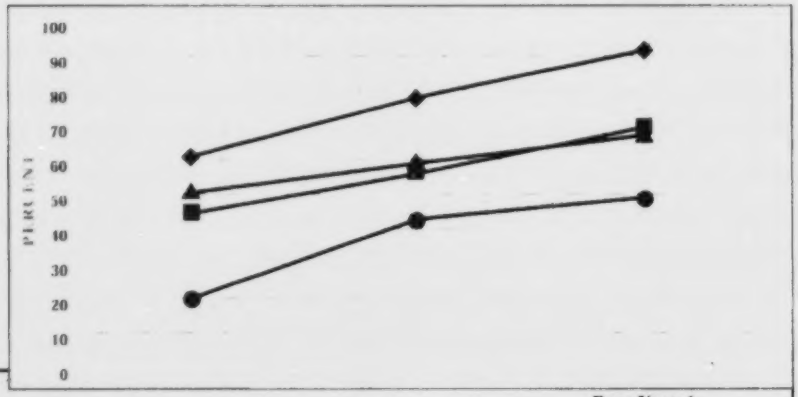
CHART V-8

STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT
Wyandotte High School:
Percent of Staff Who Say "Very Committed"
(1998 N=80, 1999 N=83)



	Pre-Planning	Post-planning	Post-Year 1 Implementation
Superintendent		78%	69%
Central Office		55%	45%
School Board		54%	58%
Union Leaders		31%	39%

STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT
Washington High School:
Percent of Staff Who Say "Very Committed"
(1998 N=68, 1999 N=72, N=62)



	Pre-Planning	Post-planning	Post-Year 1 Implementation
Superintendent	61%	78%	92%
Central Office	45%	56%	69%
School Board	51%	59%	68%
Union Leaders	20%	43%	49%

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initiative; and other actions taken by the Board – most notably the approval of weekly early release time for staff to work on improving instruction. The exception of Wyandotte High School staff may be related to the inability of the principal to get certain staffing and structural changes approved in the first year of implementation.

- Perceptions about Central Office staff commitment to FTF presented a more complex picture. Among the Wyandotte elementary and middle schools' staff, and the Washington High School staff, there were significant increases in the proportion who saw these stakeholders as very committed to the reform, resulting in the majority of the staff in these groups believing Central Office was very committed to FTF by the end of the first year of implementation. However, among the Washington elementary schools and Wyandotte High School staff, there were significant decreases on this outcome, and no change in the Washington middle schools' staff levels – with all three of these groups failing to meet the two-thirds threshold. This might be related to less visibility of the Executive Director in this cluster.
- A pattern of consistent, significant gains is seen in the proportions of staff who viewed union leaders as very committed to FTF. But at the end of Year I of implementation, this had not yet reached the threshold level in either cluster.

V. Assessing Staff's Sense of Readiness and Possibility for Change

Important early outcomes in any initiative are the participants' knowledge about the reform, belief in its necessity and commitment to the effort. In the FTF model, the final conditions are feeling ready to implement the changes, and believing change is possible to accomplish. These two are the outcomes assessed here in relation to the initiative leadership's strategy for preparing the District for change.

Creating a sense of *readiness* to change is the most closely linked to understanding the initiative and buying in to the reforms. Charts V-9 and V-10 show that, over the course of the planning year and first year of implementation, there were large, significant gains made in the proportion of staff who felt "prepared" to begin implementing FTF. Further, by the end of Year I of implementation, staff at all levels in the Wyandotte Cluster – and the elementary level in the Washington Cluster – had reached the two-thirds threshold. Though the staff in the Washington secondary schools had made great gains in this outcome, they had not reached the threshold by the end of the two-year period. This may be related to the Washington Cluster staff's lack of personal commitment, and belief that their colleagues are not committed, to the structural critical features of FTF. Staff might believe that this lack of commitment made them less than fully prepared to implement FTF.

While the staff in both clusters showed steady gains in feeling prepared for the reform, the process of creating their plans appears to have resulted in significant declines in their belief that the changes were *possible* in their buildings. Chart V-11 shows that the proportion of staff who were "very confident" that the critical features could be implemented in their schools declined during the planning year at all levels in the Wyandotte Cluster, and among the Washington middle schools' staff. The Washington elementary schools' staff showed no significant change. The Washington High School staff showed an increase, but started much lower than any other group (10%). For the most part, this trend was reversed over the course of the first year of implementation (Chart V-12). After experiencing their first year of putting these changes in place, confidence began to build again in the Wyandotte Cluster; but

CHART V-9

READINESS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL FEATURES
Wyandotte & Washington Clusters: Change in Percent of Staff "Very Prepared" Post-Roundtable to End of Planning Year
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)

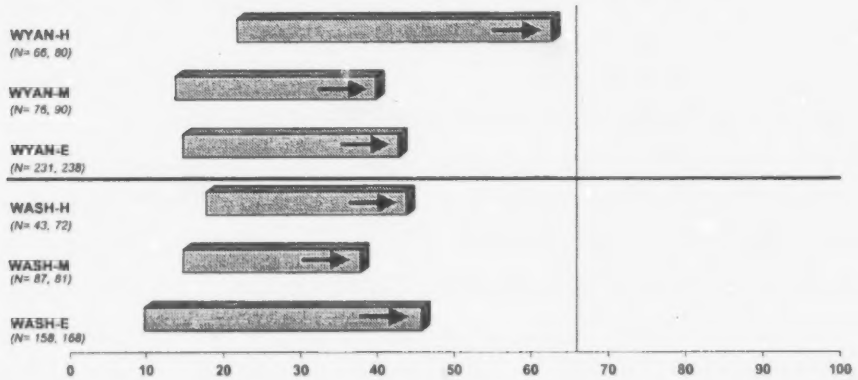


CHART V-10

READINESS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL FEATURES
Wyandotte & Washington Clusters: Change in Percent of Staff "Very Prepared" End of Planning Year to End of Year 1 Implementation
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)

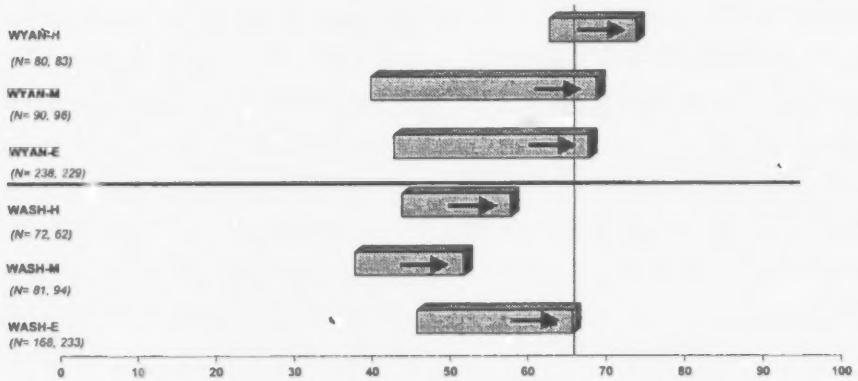


CHART V-11

POSSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL FEATURES
Wyandotte & Washington Clusters: Change in Percent of Staff "Very Confident" Post-Roundtable to End of Planning Year
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)

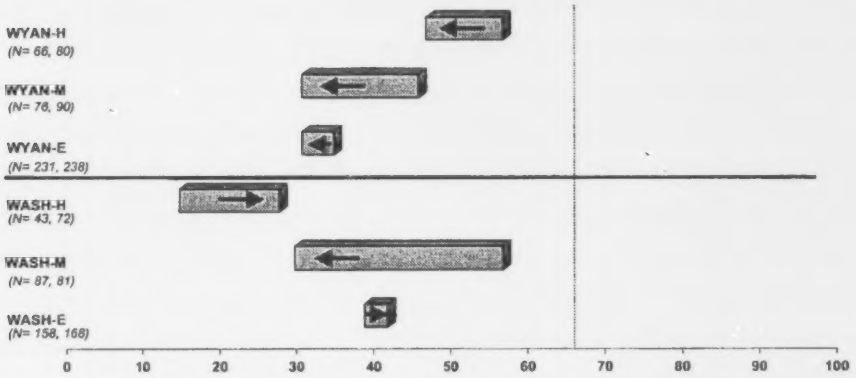
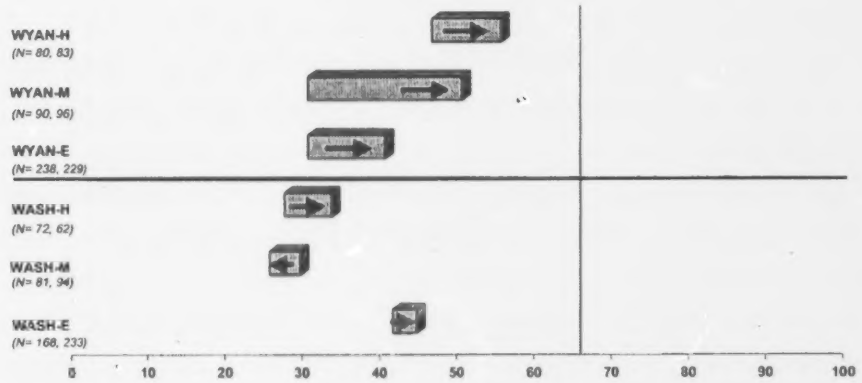


CHART V-12

POSSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL FEATURES
Wyandotte & Washington Clusters: Change in Percent of Staff "Very Confident" End of Planning Year to End of Year 1 Implementation
(N = SAMPLE SIZES)



there were no significant changes in the proportion of staff feeling very confident about FTF implementation in the Washington Cluster schools.

Given the scope of the reforms involved, this trend is not surprising. It appears that once the plans were articulated, staff became less confident that the changes would be achieved in their school – a sense of healthy skepticism, perhaps. For the Wyandotte Cluster schools, this trend was reversed after beginning implementation. Yet, by the end of one year of implementation, staff in both clusters had not yet reached the threshold where a majority were confident that the full reform was possible in their school.

Feeling ready to change is primarily a reflection of an individual's own knowledge of, and sense of commitment to, reform (which were high for the majority of staff). However, reflecting on a sense of what is *possible* requires staff to factor in the likely behavior of others. As we saw, perceptions of colleagues' and district leadership's commitment to the reform were more varied – and less positive – in the Washington Cluster. This might partially explain why the majority of Wyandotte Cluster staff had not yet expressed confidence about the possibility of reform; and why the Washington Cluster staff did not even show the gains seen in Wyandotte.

*The **key findings** regarding the early outcomes of a sense of **readiness** to reform and the belief that it will be **possible** in one's building are:*

- There were steady, significant gains in both the planning year and first year of implementation in the proportions of staff feeling very ready to implement FTF. This resulted in two-thirds or more of staff – except in the Washington Cluster secondary schools – feeling prepared for implementation.
- On the other hand, staff's sense of possibility about implementing the reforms in their school showed large declines in the planning year (except in Washington High School, which started out near zero). In the Wyandotte Cluster during implementation, gains were made in the proportion of staff feeling FTF was very likely to be implemented in their building; no change occurred in the Washington Cluster. At no level, in either cluster, did the proportion of staff reporting high confidence that reform would occur in their school reach the two-thirds threshold.

VI. Summary of Cluster-Level Early Outcomes

The data presented here illustrate that systemic change does not occur evenly, either within a cluster of schools moving through the process together, or across clusters of schools moving through the process at different times. So what conclusion can be reached about the relative success of the partners' efforts to establish the foundation for successful reform? In order to answer this question, we established a set of decision rules for assessing the overall effectiveness of the partners' planning and capacity-building efforts across the two research clusters of schools. Two fundamental premises underlie these decision rules:

1. Progress by the end of the first implementation year should be evident for each early outcome area at the cluster level.
2. Efforts designed to achieve the early outcomes should show results first by achieving the support of most staff in a given cluster of schools. Consequently, at this early stage of the reform our assessment is focused on the extent to which staff in the cluster as a whole have achieved the necessary threshold necessary to transition into systemic change.

Given these premises, the following decision rules were used to facilitate a summary assessment of the overall success of the partner's efforts to create the necessary conditions for systemic change specified in the FTF theory of change. Within each cluster, the staff at a level (elementary, middle, high) must evidence:

- High levels of awareness **and** knowledge of FTF – both are required as pre-conditions for change;
- High levels of a sense of urgency, personal and collective commitment to **two of three** structural critical features (lower ratios, continuity of care across the school day, continuity of care across school years), and **two of three** adult critical features (flexible allocation of resources, collective responsibility, and instructional autonomy) – while all people may not agree early on with all changes, there needs to be agreement about "most" of the changes in these reform areas;
- High levels of urgency, personal commitment and collective commitment to standards **and** enriched opportunities to learn – as the cornerstones of instruction, support for both of these critical feature areas must be present;
- High levels of perceived commitment by **two or more** of the key leadership groups (Superintendent, Central Office, School Board, Union) – variation can be expected in which stakeholders are seen as committed in any year, but there must be a sense that more than one of the leadership groups are highly committed to the reform;
- High levels of perceived readiness – staff must feel prepared to make difficult changes; and
- High levels of perceived possibility to implement FTF – staff must believe the changes are possible.

For each of these decision rules the *standard* for "high levels" is two-thirds or more of cluster staff reporting the most positive attitudes and beliefs on the staff survey at the end of the first year of implementation.

Wyandotte Cluster. The early reform activities in the Wyandotte Cluster appear to have been successful in building widespread staff support for most elements of the reform, but there were a few areas in which this cluster had not yet achieved the desired early outcomes of the FTF model (see Table V-5). That is, the initiative was successful in achieving high levels of:

- Awareness and knowledge of FTF at each level in the cluster (elementary, middle school and high school);
- A sense of urgency about, and personal commitment to, all elements of the reform at each level in the cluster;
- Perceptions of collective commitment to the adult critical features at all levels;
- Perceptions of collective commitment to the structural and instructional reforms at two of the three levels;
- Staff belief that key leadership stakeholders are highly committed to the initiative at two of the three levels; and
- A sense of readiness to do the work of implementing the reforms across all three levels in the cluster.

TABLE V-5

CLUSTER SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING EARLY OUTCOMES

	Wyandotte			Washington		
*OUTCOME	ELEM.	MIDDLE	HIGH	ELEM.	MIDDLE	HIGH
Awareness/Knowledge	X	X	X		X	X
Urgency						
structural critical features	X	X	X	X	X	X
standards/instruction	X	X	X	X	X	X
adult critical features	X	X	X	X	X	X
Personal Commitment						
structural critical features	X	X	X			
standards/instruction	X	X	X	X	X	X
adult critical features	X	X	X	X		X
Collective Commitment						
structural critical features		X	X			
standards/instruction	X	X		X		
adult critical features	X	X	X	X	X	
Stakeholder Commitment	X	X		X		X
Readiness	X	X	X	X		
Possibility						

X = *staff at level met "success" standard for early outcomes*

There were two areas in which the initiative strategies had not yet resulted in achieving the desired early outcomes regarding perceptions of commitment in the Wyandotte High School level; and one area where the elementary staff had not reached the desired threshold. More specifically, the high school staff did not reach the threshold of two-thirds believing their colleagues were committed to the instructional reforms (standards and enriched opportunities to learn); but this is due solely to the drop during the first year of implementation in the proportion of staff believing their colleagues were committed to improving academic standards. While the decrease in this proportion was large, the percent believing there was collective commitment to this critical feature was still very near the two-thirds threshold (65%). This suggests that this area is not a highly problematic one for the high school-level staff, yet one that did go through an "implementation dip" that bears watching.

The other area in which high school staff had not reached the desired level on the early outcomes was in regard to perceptions of leadership groups' commitment to the initiative. As discussed in this chapter, this is likely due to the fact that the high school-level data reflect the feelings of staff at one building; and some changes that were proposed by the principal were not supported by Central Office or the Board

in the first year of implementation.

The only area in which elementary schools' staff did not reach the two-thirds threshold for the early outcomes was in perceptions of collective commitment to the structural critical features. This reflects primarily the lower number of staff who believed their colleagues were committed to continuity of care. The variations seen in how the elementary schools planned to implement this critical feature, and the fact that two of the seven schools had not even proposed any form of looping (see Chapter IV), suggests that this is an area without widespread agreement among the staff at this level.

The only early outcome that was not achieved by the staff at any level in this cluster was in developing a widespread sense of possibility of implementing the reforms in buildings. Convincing most staff that it is highly likely that the reforms will happen did not result from the partners' efforts in the early years of this work. This trend should be closely followed in order to discern what is required to change staff beliefs in this area.

Overall, the evidence supports the conclusion that, in large part, the partners' activities and strategies in the Wyandotte Cluster were able to produce the theory of change's stated necessary conditions (early outcomes) for successfully engaging in the systemic changes of FTF. Efforts should continue toward creating the conditions for successful implementation of the structural critical features in the elementary schools, for improved instruction at the high school level and for creating a sense of confidence that the reforms can actually be implemented by each building.

Washington Cluster. The evidence indicates that the initiative's strategies for achieving the early outcomes were not as successful with this cluster as they were in the Wyandotte Cluster (see Table V-5). A sense of urgency about the changes was widespread by the end of the first year of implementation – staff at all levels passed the two-thirds threshold of believing these reforms were necessary. And a sense of high personal commitment to the necessary instructional reforms (standards and enriched opportunities to learn) was achieved among two-thirds or more of the staff. But no other early outcome was achieved across all three levels of staff in this cluster.

The staff at all three levels (elementary, middle, high school) were below the two-thirds threshold in the proportion who felt high personal commitment to, and who believed their colleagues were committed to, the structural critical features. This appears to be connected, at least in part, to the fact that the partners changed strategies for planning for these critical features – by becoming more directive about options – during this cluster's planning year. This again points to the sensitivity of staff's reactions to how the initiative leadership approaches any perceived changes in building autonomy in decision-making. It also appears to be connected in part to the culture of other clusters believing their students were "better" than those in Wyandotte. Choosing the cluster most in need as the first implementation cluster may have had the unintended consequence of creating a feeling in the later implementation clusters that they need not do as much or follow the same course as Wyandotte in reforming their schools because they are "different."

The secondary level staff (middle and high school) had also not reached a two-thirds majority believing their colleagues were committed to the planned instructional reforms. This may in part reflect some of the instructional debates (described in Chapter III) that arose in the district since the approach to instruction took shape later in the course of the initiative; and in part reflect genuine skepticism about colleagues' willingness to change their instructional practices. It is also true that the

early years of the initiative did not increase either cluster staff's sense that their colleagues were prepared to change instruction. The Wyandotte staff was over the two-thirds threshold because they started there at the outset of the reform. The Washington staff started below the threshold and also did not change during the first two years.

There were a few other scattered areas where staff in one of the cluster's levels did not attain the desired level on an early outcome. The only area in which the Washington Cluster overall did not make the progress shown in the Wyandotte Cluster was in regard to a sense of readiness to implement reforms. The secondary level staff had not reached the two-thirds majority feeling ready to implement changes by the end of the first year of implementation. And, as in Wyandotte, all three levels of staff did not achieve the early outcome of a widespread sense of possibility that the reforms would happen in their buildings.

Overall, this pattern of results suggests that while the initiative succeeded in establishing in the Washington Cluster some of the conditions necessary to implementation of FTF, there were a number of significant gaps in the early outcomes at the end of the first year of implementation that, if not addressed, could create further challenges to effective later implementation. Part of the difference in early outcomes between the two clusters may be related to refinements in the partners' strategies that were made during the course of the Washington Cluster's planning year. Differences in support by Central Office staff (the Executive Director and the SIFs) might also have contributed to the differences between the clusters.

Part might also be due to a difference between the two clusters' culture. The belief that their schools were better than the Wyandotte Cluster schools may have contributed to Washington Cluster staff wanting to approach implementation in a different way than Wyandotte; but there were only a limited number of ways in which the structural changes could be approached. In some key areas (most notably around enriched instructional opportunities) the baseline levels on early outcomes were significantly lower in the Washington Cluster, and the staff did not pass the two-thirds threshold. This suggests that different and/or additional strategies might be required to build support for reforms, depending on what staff beliefs are prior to the reform – particularly in sensitive areas like changing the way teachers deliver instruction.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Many of the conditions and challenges faced by the Kansas City, Kansas, schools are typical of urban school Districts throughout the U.S.: poor student performance, leadership turmoil, court desegregation orders, shrinking federal and state funding, declining enrollments, and shifts in the demographic makeup of the student population. And, many of the major components of the reform effort in KCK are also typical of other large-scale, comprehensive school improvement efforts: a strong model of reform, the availability of technical assistance, and external funding to support the reform work.

What is less typical about the KCK experience was the ability of the reform to weather District leadership changes – common in urban systems – with the reform initiative intact and no break in its progress. This achievement can be considered an early, significant success, and the following elements appear to have contributed to this success.

The KCK reform effort started with a highly specified *theory* of change and *strategy* for introducing it to stakeholders; a group of active partners with *defined accountability* and an openness to taking on new roles; a willingness on the part of the District's leaders to *reallocate* its *resources* and reconfigure its Central Office administration to support the reform; and the belief from the outset that *evaluation* of the effort was critical to assessing and refining the strategies put in place.

As one District leader framed it: "You need to build as many supports and pressures around (the reform) as possible from the outside or it will collapse ... that's what gets you through the tough times ... (if you don't) when things like leadership changes happen, the system will go back to status quo." To date, the initiative strategies appear to have struck an effective balance between these pressures and supports.

The FTF theory of change, and IRRE's Roundtable process for engaging stakeholders at all levels in the reform, laid the groundwork for securing the political, District, and funding support required to initiate and sustain the initiative through these early years. The Board of Education, the Federal courts, three Superintendents, the union leadership, and the major external funder (Kauffman) all believed strongly enough in the FTF model to adopt it as the mechanism for achieving academic success for all students. Along with the developer of the framework, these stakeholders provided enough internal and external pressure to keep the reform moving forward. But lasting system change also requires targeted support to go along with the pressure.

The theory of change also served to keep restructuring efforts, resource allocation and implementation support activities focused on achieving clearly defined goals. The accountability plan that grew out of the theory of change was the mechanism for defining, in advance, what each partner would do to support each phase of the reform; and all three partners (the District, IRRE and Kauffman) actively worked together to assess the effectiveness of their support and make adjustments as needed. The District reorganized its senior administrative personnel to maximize support for the buildings undergoing change, and provided the resources for District-wide professional development; IRRE worked closely with the District to identify and supply external technical assistance; and the Kauffman Foundation was flexible and proactive about filling gaps in resources and capacity.

Chapter III outlined the level of effort required to achieve collaboration by diverse stakeholder groups, and the pressures and supports that drove the initiative's early years. Without the widespread consensus-building activities, and FTF's highly defined and focused approach, the initiative may have lacked the commitment and momentum to carry it through the precarious early period.

Thus, **one lesson** appears to be that a change framework considered to be more prescriptive than many is not only capable of achieving the necessary level of commitment by a system's leadership, it may have been a key factor in the ability of the system to "stay the course" as important contextual factors changed. Other system reform initiatives (within and outside education) should observe – when weighing the appropriate blend of reform model definition and local autonomy – the value of model specificity from the outset.

The **second lesson** to be drawn from this work is that, overall, the linkage in the change framework between the initiative's strategies and the early outcomes appears to be holding up. In the first years of involvement with the initiative, the strategies used appear to have been an effective way to achieve the early outcomes: building staff became convinced of the need for the FTF reforms, knowledgeable about what they entail, mainly committed to making these changes, and convinced that District leadership groups were committed to the reform. Staff in the first cluster of schools to begin reform also came to believe that their building colleagues were committed to making the necessary changes happen and were ready to implement the reforms.

However, there were also some areas in which building staff did not achieve high levels in the early outcomes set as the standard in this evaluation. This suggests a **third lesson:** phasing schools in to a reform rather than engaging them all at once, and allowing staff autonomy in choosing their building's strategies for implementing reforms, appear to have consequences for achieving the model's early outcomes.

In the second group of schools to begin the reform, the benchmark for success (a two-thirds majority) was not reached regarding commitment to making the model's required structural changes. This second clusters' staff also did not consider themselves ready to implement the reforms at the end of their first year of implementation. Upon reflection, these gaps in early outcomes appear to be related more to differences in culture in the two groups of schools and to the strategies used by initiative leaders, rather than an indication that the theory of change is incorrect.

While there is no definitive evidence to explain this staff's lack of commitment, or possibly resistance, to structural changes, the research did provide some clues about its causes. The specificity of the structural reform requirements in the FTF model could only be met by a limited number of strategies. Once the first cluster of schools – selected because they had the poorest student performance – had incorporated these strategies into their plans, the second cluster appeared to resist using these same strategies. These staff wanted to be "different" from the Wyandotte Cluster, perhaps because they believed they have better students; perhaps because the strategies for making structural changes were codified by the initiative leaders during this group's planning process. The initiative leaders themselves have expressed the opinion that phasing in implementation may have contributed to the later cluster developing resistance to change. While the phase-in strategy was chosen because the partners believed early success would convince others the reforms were possible, the District did not have the resources to support all the building's planning and implementation at once. This may have created challenges the partners need to address.

In contrast, the instructional reforms were more widely perceived as changes supported by the large majority of staff in this cluster. It is possible this difference was related to the District not having developed its instructional strategy during the early years of the initiative. This left a wide variety of strategies open for consideration by buildings, which may have made it easier for staff to believe that they, and their colleagues, would have greater control over the changes. In the last year, the District has become more directive about instructional reforms, so the continuing research should shed further light on the connections between the degree of directiveness of reform and the amount of resistance encountered. Furthermore, the expansion of the FTF model into other sites without the KCK phase-in plan, or modifications in building planning process, will provide further evidence about how the strategies used affect the achievement of early outcomes for school building staff.

The one early outcome on which the initiative did not show progress in the first two years was staff's belief that implementation of FTF is possible (i.e., that it is very likely to be implemented). This could reflect a hesitancy on staff's part to put their full faith in the initiative, or it could be indicative of an area where the theory of change does not hold up. It is still too soon to reach either conclusion. In coming years, the initiative leaders may want to explore more deeply why staff are not convinced the reforms will happen and develop strategies to address this uncertainty. This will also be a topic of further study in the research.

The ongoing evaluation in KCK will continue to track the relationship between the strategies and supports put in place by the partners, and the progress of the initiative at the building level. One of the issues to be followed is how the systemic nature of this reform – all schools in the District undergoing change together – presents different opportunities and challenges than those encountered by individual buildings attempting comprehensive change. As the initiative moves into the next phase, the research will also continue to test the pathways in the FTF model: first by examining the linkages between the early outcomes considered here, and the level and quality of implementation of the critical features in the school buildings (the next pathway in the model); and finally, by examining the connection between reform in schools and improved student performance. The research on this last pathway will contribute to our understanding of education reform and how to strengthen environments so they better support youth in achieving the important developmental milestones that ultimately lead to a healthy adulthood.

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APPENDIX A

First Things First Implementation Study Team Qualitative Methodology

The First Things First (FTF) Implementation Study Team is entirely qualitative in its approach. Our purposes have been to focus on explorations of three basic research questions:

- How the First Things First (FTF) came about and how it unfolds at the initiative/district-level, including documentation of events that shape the evolution of FTF.
- What was the process and context of planning and capacity-building surrounding the implementation of FTF at individual Kansas City, Kansas schools in the Washington and Wyandotte Clusters, and in the Central Office.
- Did these processes lead to a sense of urgency, awareness, knowledge of, and engagement in the Initiative.

These questions converge with those addressed by the Research Management Team. The qualitative data collected by the Implementation Study Team are intended (a) to provide case study contextual information to help explain, interpret and expand the results of the quantitative measures used by the RMT; and (b) to identify any unanticipated factors that may contribute to understanding the process of designing and implementing district-wide school reform.

The sections that follow explain the approach to the qualitative research design utilized by the Implementation Study Team, the sampling plan, the data collection process and analysis. In each section, we describe the methods employed to ensure the soundness of the study.

I. Overall Research Design

The case study approach used in this research is a type of unstructured, "grounded theory" methodology: that is, it suggests a theory, gathers information to test that theory, refines the theory and gathers further information in a cyclical fashion to develop a theory that is organically rooted in the context of the setting (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Qualitative research authorities differ concerning the degree to which the initial research questions should be prestructured, or based on an initial framework of understanding. Most qualitative research begins at a point where something is known about a phenomenon, but not enough to house a theory. "The researcher has an idea of the parts of the phenomenon ... and knows where to look for those things ... At the outset, then, we usually have at least a rudimentary conceptual framework" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 17). In fact, some qualitative methodologists argue that it is impossible to have a totally unbiased or objective approach to any phenomenon, and that, therefore, a hallmark of quality is an up-front or honest description of the investigator's initial bias: "Detachment and author objectivity are barriers to quality, not insurance of having achieved it" (Lincoln,1995, p. 280). Furthermore, evidence of "bias" can be inferred if, throughout the progress of the study, the investigator fails to change the framework or basis for study. A failure to change suggests the investigator is not allowing the emergent theory to be truly "grounded" in the cumulative weight of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As a result, the overall process of conducting a qualitative research study is one of

alternating theory formation, data collection, analysis and theory reformation in a kind of pulsating fashion until a final round of data collection results in no substantially new information – called "saturation" (Stainback & Stainback, 1984).

Evidence of change (or allowing the data to shape the theory) can be found in the successive iterations of the themes and the graphic model, across time. This is called an "audit trail" (Morse, 1994). The audit trail is one way to establish the study's "plausibility" (analogous to the term "validity" in quantitative research) through the use of an outside evaluator who is an experienced qualitative methodologist and who reviews all the successive documents. Because a basic tenet of the qualitative paradigm is that there is no one single "truth," but rather multiple realities and rich, overlapping contextual factors, the goal of the audit is not to "replicate" the study but to determine the "plausibility" of the original investigator's conclusions. That is, after reviewing the successive iterations of the framework and samples of the raw data, the question is not whether the auditor agrees with the conclusions, but whether the auditor can see how those conclusions were reached (Morse, 1994).

Another way to establish validity or "plausibility" of the data gathered is by presenting a rich description of all the data gathered – an outline and definition of the framework and each of its components, along with examples illustrating each one (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Such "thick description" is considered necessary because it allows for a report on all the contextual and extenuating circumstances, as well as enough examples of raw information to provide the reader with a basis for judging how the investigator came to those conclusions. Again, the question is not whether the conclusions represent some objective "truth," but whether the particular interpretations and typologies generated are "plausible" based on the evidence presented.

Strategies used in this study to ensure soundness in the overall research design:

- An initial framework for approaching the study was based in the Theory of Change model for the overall study. The intent was to seek an understanding of the contextual factors that influenced decision-making and acceptance of reform by all the participants. From this initial framework, thematic elements were extracted and used to guide data collection in subsequent years. At the end of Year I, the data were analyzed using a modification of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Loucks, Newlove, & Hall, 1998). An additional framework was used in Year II based on a study of school reform listing Evans' (1996) six categories of factors influencing organizational capacity for change (e.g., politics, history, organizational stress, culture). Evans' work, *The Human Side of School Change*, was used by key members of the FTF Executive Committee, and by a number of SIFs. This framework was subsequently abandoned after determining that the factors in this framework led to an unbalanced focus on negative events in the schools. The current framework for data collection is based on extracted thematic elements that are hypothesized as contributing factors influencing change (e.g., leadership, personnel development, staff relationships). Evidence of the changing framework of inquiry is available in annual reports.
- The Implementation Study Team is composed of team members with different types of biases. The Principal Investigator is a special educator with expertise in qualitative methodology, early childhood education, families from poverty or disability backgrounds, parent-school relationships, and public policy related to poverty and disability. Two senior investigators have primary research expertise in school reform and a practice background in

school administration (both principal- and district-level). Two student research assistants are graduate students in sociology with training in ethnographic methodologies. Thus we had two "content area" members of the team, balanced by three "methodological area" members. The content area members primarily provided guidance in suggesting what to observe in different school settings and interpreting information. The methodological team members were the "hypothesis testers," utilizing observations of verbal and non-verbal interactions, as well as their interviewing and analysis skills, to test the concepts being proposed and to suggest additional areas for follow-up.

- At this interim stage, no complete audit has been performed. However, the staff of the Research Department at Kauffman did review the data from transcripts taken in Year II of the study. The data had been globally sorted, using NUD*IST (a qualitative software program) into categories related to the items in the Year II interview protocol.

II. Sampling Plan

Qualitative samples are deliberately small because the purpose is to gather detailed, in-depth and open-ended information from each of the members of the sample. Therefore, a variety of strategies may be used to ensure that the sample provides as much information as possible. Most of these strategies are variants of "purposive sampling" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), which means deliberately selecting (rather than randomly assigning) participants based on pre-determined characteristics. Some purposive sampling strategies include *comprehensive sampling*, or examining every case or element in a given population; *quota selection*, or identifying major subgroups and taking a few from each; *reputational case selection*, or choosing "experts," "key informants," or more likely articulate members of the group (Goetz & Lecompte, 1984). Still another purposive sampling strategy includes *maximum variation sampling* (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), which seeks out extreme or deviant as well as typical cases to include. In any case, the choice of informants, events to observe and so on are driven by the conceptual or theoretical considerations that emerge, rather than by a concern for "representativeness" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Another characteristic of qualitative sampling is that the total number in the sample, as well as the purposive selection characteristics, moves forward in a rolling or iterative set of waves, similar to the progress of the overall research design (Miles & Huberman, 1994). That is, as observations and information emerge, new people, observational opportunities and documents will suggest themselves. Again, the goal is to continue the process until "saturation" is reached, and no new information develops.

In this study, strategies to ensure rigor in the sampling process have included:

- With respect to the schools selected for study in this investigation, the Implementation Study might be considered a "quota selection," based on characteristics of the four clusters comprising the District as a whole. The Wyandotte and Washington Clusters differ in two important respects: (a) Wyandotte was the first cluster to engage in FTF, while the other clusters (including Washington) had an opportunity for exposure to the concepts of FTF before beginning participation; (b) Wyandotte and Washington differ in the socioeconomic and ethnic makeup of the students served.
- With respect to selection of schools *within* the clusters in the study, this is a comprehensive sample, involving the development of case study profiles of all 20 schools in the two clusters.

- Within each of the settings (schools and Central Office), the initial sampling involved "key informant" selection. In the Central Office, this involved interviewing representatives of the School Board, members of the Management Team, consultants from IRRE and representatives from Kauffman. At each school, key informants were the principal(s) and those selected for the Stakeholder Committees. Based on findings in these interviews, we subsequently interviewed groups of faculty who were not involved in planning or implementation in a leadership capacity, as well as parents and students. We also selected additional interview respondents based on information gained from the key respondents (e.g., staff who were disgruntled, staff representing "specials" teachers), as an example of maximum variation sampling.

- Selection of meetings to observe followed a similar pattern. Primarily, we selected meetings involving both District-level interactions (school board meetings, SIF meetings, cluster meetings, Networking meetings), and school-level interactions (Stakeholder meetings). Sampling of observations involved attending these meetings early and late in the school year in order to observe any changes in the dynamics of the groups being observed.

- Documents gathered included both those specified by the RMT as key documents to describe FTF and agreements among the parties, and those that emerged through the course of data collection. These included handouts provided at meetings, and training guides and policy documents referred to by interview respondents.

III. Data Collection

Two methods ensured soundness in data collection in qualitative research: member checking and triangulation. Member checking is analogous to reliability in the quantitative paradigm. It consists of presenting the emerging outline or parts of the results to some or all of the members of the original sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Triangulation is the use of several kinds of methods or data to establish "credibility" (analogous to validity) of the findings. Types of triangulation include (a) data triangulation, the use of a variety of data sources; (b) investigator triangulation, the use of several different researchers; (c) theory triangulation, the use of multiple perspectives to interpret the data; and (d) methodological triangulation, the use of multiple methods to study a single problem (Janesick, 1994).

In this study, methods for member checking and triangulation included:

- Key interview respondents (i.e., principals and Management Team members) were given an opportunity to review typed field notes from their interviews. The respondents were invited to provide corrections for accuracy, and also to mark any passages they wished to remain confidential.

- Principals were interviewed twice each year, in the fall and the spring. In the spring interviews, they were asked their opinions about emerging questions or issues the Study Team was considering.

- Investigator triangulation occurred through the make-up of the Study Team, described above. The Study Team met on a bi-monthly basis to review insights and findings, and to decide on issues to follow in their continuing interviews.

- Data triangulation occurred through multiple data sources including interviews, meeting observations, and documents. Table V-1 provides a review of the data sources for the Year II analysis. A similar pattern was utilized during Year I, except that during this year the Study Team had not yet become involved with the Washington cluster.
- Theory triangulation involved application of multiple theoretical perspectives of change, including both the primary Theory of Change for FTF, the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Loucks, et al., 1998), and the theory of resistance to change developed by Evans (1996), included in our description of the research design above.
- Methodological triangulation included the use of a variety of methods for data collection, including individual interviews, focus groups, meeting observations and document content analysis. In a larger context, the Implementation Study itself is a kind of methodological triangulation of the quantitative measures taken by the RMT, leading to an integrated research design involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

IV. Data Analysis

Miles & Huberman (1994) suggest three linked subprocesses in data analysis: (a) data reduction, (b) data display and (c) drawing conclusions and verifying (i.e., developing questions or approaches for the next round of data collection). This pattern of analysis occurs in a circular and continuous fashion as a study progresses. Data reduction is the process of identifying patterns, categories or themes in the data. One begins the process by identifying "broad brush" emergent themes,

TABLE A-1: SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTED FOR YEAR II ANALYSIS

DATA SOURCE	DISTRICT LEVEL	WYANDOTTE CLUSTER	WASHINGTON CLUSTER
Interviews/Focus Groups			
Principals, Asst.Prin.	—	18	23
Stakeholders/staff	—	113	70
Student focus groups	—	5 (30 students)	—
District/initiative staff	29	—	—
Observations			
Wednesday in-services		9	10
SLC team meetings		6	—
Classroom walkthroughs		6	9
District-level meetings	15		
Documents			
District-level policy papers	19	—	—
School level documents	—	10	11
UMKC student papers	—	4	3

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and then uses those broad themes as an initial coding framework to do later, more detailed analyses. Themes may be identified by asking what the data are saying with respect to processes, relationships, context or intervening conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data display involves the process of putting identified themes together in a variety of ways to see if it facilitates greater understanding of the questions. Ways to accomplish data display include generating matrices, flow charts or other graphics that will enhance understanding of the dynamics at work (Miles & Huberman, 1994). At this stage, developing a range of different ways to display the data, in order to provide a variety of perspectives on the information, is helpful. Conclusion-drawing involves the use of a variety of tactics such as triangulation, looking for negative cases, following up surprises and checking results with respondents (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Techniques used in data analysis for this study include the following:

- Data reduction was a continuous process that occurred in Implementation Study Team meetings. Emergent themes were identified as each team member reported insights and findings from ongoing interviews and observations, and other team members attempted to find similarities, contradictions or negative cases in their own experiences.
- Another type of data reduction, used in Year II, was computer-assisted analysis, utilizing NUD*IST (QSR, 1997), a qualitative software program. Data from interview transcripts and field notes from observations were coded and sorted into categories. These were used, in turn, for further identification of emerging themes.
- For data displays to aid in data collection as well as continuing checking of emerging themes, we developed rubrics against which we rated schools on various parameters related to emerging themes. In Years I and II these included ratings of schools' status on the six factors in Evans' (1996) organizational change framework, as well as numerical ratings of levels of engagement and change on each of the Critical Features in the FTF model. The numerical ratings of change were displayed as figures in the Year II report.
- Another mechanism for data display was the use of matrices developed to allow side-by-side comparison of schools on various parameters. These included comparisons of schools on background characteristics, resources or pre-existing assets, decision-making processes, and so on. Another table was developed to allow comparison of responses to the Critical Features, as expressed in each school's School Improvement Plan.
- Verification included periodic presentations of preliminary findings to the RMT and the Executive Committee. Both groups presented questions, probes, and comments that resulted in modifications of the emerging theory.

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APPENDIX B

EARLY OUTCOMES QUANTITATIVE STUDY METHOD

I. Measures

The Early Outcome Measures consist of single-item measures of the following constructs:

- **Awareness of the FTF Initiative;**
- **Knowledge:** a single item assessing general knowledge of the FTF Initiative, and nine items assessing knowledge of each of the critical features;
- **Urgency:** regarding the extent to which implementing each of the critical features would make a difference for their students;
- **Personal Commitment:** how enthusiastic each staff member feels about implementing each of the critical features;
- **Collective Commitment:** extent to which other staff members in their school would work toward implementing each of the critical features;
- **Stakeholder Commitment:** how committed to the FTF initiative staff members perceive external stakeholders to be (i.e., Superintendent, Central Office, School Board, Union, And Community);
- **Readiness:** a single item measuring the extent to which the respondent feels ready to participate in the FTF Initiative; and
- **Possibility:** a single item measuring the extent to which the respondent believes that it is possible to implement the critical features in the particular school where the respondent works.

Analyses of these single-item measures were conducted to verify that there was a good distribution and variance on each item.

II. Administration Timeline

The following chart indicates when each early outcome measure was administered in each cluster.

TABLE B-1: TIMELINE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE EARLY OUTCOME MEASURES

EARLY OUTCOME MEASURE	1997 SPRING *	1997 FALL **	1998 SPRING	1998 FALL ***	1999 SPRING	1999 FALL	2000 SPRING	2000 FALL
Awareness			X		X		X	
Knowledge		X	X	X	X		X	
Urgency	X		X		X		X	
Personal Commitment	X		X		X		X	
Collective Commitment	X		X		X		X	
Stakeholder Commitment			X		X		X	
Readiness		X	X	X	X		X	
Possibility		X	X	X	X		X	

* Teacher Survey administered to entire District
** Roundtable Survey administered to Wyandotte Cluster Only
*** Roundtable Survey administered to Washington Cluster Only
In Spring 1998, 1999 and 2000, Staff Survey administered to entire District

III. Description of Surveys

Spring 1997 Teacher Survey

Description. The 1997 Teacher Survey was a brief measure including three early outcome items: collective commitment, personal commitment and urgency. Each item consisted of a statement of a critical feature, followed by a series of three items asking teachers to describe their feelings and beliefs about the value of implementing the feature.

Assessment procedures and description of sample. This survey was administered only once – during the spring semester of the 1996-1997 academic year. At all schools, teachers were asked to complete the survey during a staff meeting. All teachers in all clusters were surveyed.

The table below presents the number of teachers included in the analysis sample for each cluster at each school level. Response rates are not available for this survey.

TABLE B-2: ANALYSIS SAMPLE FOR THE 1997 TEACHER SURVEY

CLUSTER	ELEMENTARY LEVEL	MIDDLE LEVEL	HIGH LEVEL
Wyandotte	177	89	33
Washington	140	78	68

Roundtable Survey

Description. Most of the items in the Roundtable Survey asked the respondent to evaluate the quality and value of the Roundtable. Embedded among these items were three items tapping Early Outcomes – including perceived possibility, perceived personal readiness for implementing the critical features, and perceived knowledge about the critical features (one general item and one 7-part item regarding knowledge of each of the seven critical features).

Assessment procedures and information on sample. The Roundtable Survey was included in a notebook of materials presented to each participant at the beginning of each Roundtable. Whole-school Roundtables were conducted for each cluster at the start of its planning year (Fall 1997 for Wyandotte Cluster and Fall 1998 for Washington Cluster). Completed surveys were collected at the end of the day.

The Roundtable surveys were administered to anyone who attended the Roundtable, including teachers, administrators, aides, paraprofessionals, counselors, secretarial staff, maintenance staff, students, parents and other community members, Central Office personnel, the Superintendent, and representatives of the Kauffman Foundation. The analysis sample included only educational staff working in the schools who attended the Roundtable; this created a sample comparable to the staff survey samples collected in subsequent years.

The following table presents, by year and level, the number of teachers who were included in the analysis sample for each cluster at each school level. Response rates are not available for the Roundtable Surveys.

TABLE B-3: ANALYSIS SAMPLE FOR THE 1997 AND 1998 ROUNDTABLE STAFF SURVEYS

CLUSTER	ELEMENTARY LEVEL	MIDDLE LEVEL	HIGH LEVEL
Fall 1997 Wyandotte Cluster Roundtable	231	76	66
Fall 1998 Washington Cluster Roundtable	158	87	43

Staff Survey

Description. The Staff Survey was designed by the Research Management Team. Some of the Early Outcome items included on the Staff Survey are very similar or identical to those included in the Roundtable Survey. Other items are unique to the Staff Survey. The early outcomes included in both the Roundtable and Staff Survey are Knowledge, Readiness and Possibility. Early outcome items included on the 1997 Teacher Survey and the Staff Survey are Urgency, Personal Support and Collective Support. Items unique to the Staff Survey are Awareness and Commitment of External Stakeholders (e.g., Superintendent, Central Office, School Board, Union and Community).

Assessment procedures and information on sample. The Staff Survey was administered in all clusters in Spring 1998, Spring 1999 and Spring 2000. All educational staff members at each school were asked to complete this survey during staff meetings.

The table below presents, by year and level, the number of educational staff members who were included in the analysis sample for each cluster.

TABLE B-4: ANALYSIS SAMPLE FOR THE 1998, 1999 AND 2000 STAFF SURVEYS

	ELEMENTARY LEVEL			MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL			HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL		
CLUSTER	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
Wyandotte	238	231	257	90	96	106	80	83	82
Washington	166	168	233	73	81	91	68	72	62

The following table presents, by year and level, the percentage of staff from each cluster who responded to the survey.

TABLE B-5: RESPONSE RATES FOR THE 1998, 1999, AND 2000 STAFF SURVEYS (IN PERCENTAGES)

	ELEMENTARY LEVEL			MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL			HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL		
CLUSTER	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
Wyandotte	84%	79%	89%	100%	93%	100%	89%	93%	83%
Washington	90%	80%	99%	79%	88%	93%	82%	96%	81%

IV. Revisions to Staff Survey between 1997 and 1998

A small number of the items on the staff surveys were revised between the 1997 and 1998 administrations. See the last section of this appendix to review the different wording of these items. Three types of information are included in the appendix: variations between the 1997 Teacher Survey administered in the Fall and the Staff Survey first administered in Spring 1998; variations between the Roundtable survey and the Staff Survey; and items included on the Staff Survey that were not included on either of the 1997 surveys.

VARIATIONS IN WORDING OF THE EARLY OUTCOME ITEMS

1997 Teacher Survey Versus 1998 Staff Survey[25]

ANSWER CHOICES

When I consider doing this, I feel:

Dismayed | Concerned | Nothing in Particular | Positive | Enthusiastic

To make a real difference in our students' performance, implementing this Critical Feature:

Would hurt | Would not matter much | Would help | Is essential

In your opinion, how strongly does the staff here support or oppose implementing this critical feature? Would you say most staff would:

Actively oppose it | Passively oppose it | Not stand in the way | Support other staff members' efforts | Do whatever is necessary to make it happen

ITEMS

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Lower student/adult ratios to an average of 15:1 or less during core instructional periods (without significant increases in personnel costs).

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Lower student/adult ratios to an average of 13 students to 1 teacher during core instructional periods by redistributing teachers and other adult staff.**

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Change school and staff structure so that smaller teams of teachers and other staff stay with the same group of students for multiple years.

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Change school and staff structure so that smaller teams of teachers and other staff stay with the same group of students for multiple years and subjects.**

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Change schedules so that teams of students and school staff can stay together across longer periods of time during the school day.

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Change schedules so that teams of students and teachers can stay together across longer periods of time during the school day.**

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Set high, clear, fair, and consistently applied standards of student conduct for all students.

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Set high, clear, and consistently enforced standards of student conduct.**

[25] 1998 Staff Survey was re-administered in 1999 and 2000.

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Set high, clear, fair, and consistently applied academic standards for all students.

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Set high and consistently applied academic standards for all students.**

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Provide more enriched and diversified opportunities for students to learn, perform, and be recognized.

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Provide more enriched and diversified opportunities for student to learn, perform, and be recognized.**

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Give school staff more instructional autonomy (e.g., school staff decide what instructional strategies they will use to best meet the needs of their students).

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Give school staff more instructional supports (e.g., adequate time and resources to engage in professional development).

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Give teachers more instructional autonomy (teachers decide how to support students' meeting standards) and supports (professional development opportunities and planning time).**

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Teams of school staff assume collective responsibility for their students meeting academic and behavioral standards.

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Have teachers assume collective responsibility for improving student performance.**

1998 STAFF SURVEY: Have teams of school staff decide how to allocate available resources (e.g., staff, time, money, and space) to best meet their students' needs.

1997 TEACHER SURVEY: **Have teams of teachers decide how to allocate available resources for their students (staff, time, money, and space).**

Staff Survey Versus Roundtable Surveys

KNOWLEDGE

Staff Survey Item

Based on the information you have about the First Things First Initiative, how well do you feel you understand the initiative?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Understand Very Little			Understand Some			Understand Very Well

Roundtable Item

Based on the information you have seen and heard how much do you feel you know about the seven critical features?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Understand Very Little			Understand Some But Still Need Information			Understand Most or All of the Critical Features

Staff Survey Items

More specifically, how well do you feel you understand each of the critical features? (Use the same rating scale as above by circling a number to the right of the critical feature)

Student Critical Features

A. Lower student/adult ratios during core instructional periods	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
B. Continuity of care across school years	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C. Continuity of care across school days	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D. High, clear, and fair academic and conduct standards	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
E. Provide enriched and diverse opportunities to learn, to perform, and to be recognized	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Adult Critical Features

F. Teams of school staff assume collective responsibility for their students meeting academic and behavioral standards	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
G. Teams of school staff have more instructional, autonomy (e.g., school staff decide what instructional strategies they will use to best meet the needs of their students)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
H. Teams of school staff have more instructional supports (e.g., adequate time and resources to engage in professional development).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I. Teams of school staff have flexible allocation of available resources (e.g., staff, time, money, and space) to best meet heir students' needs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Roundtable Item

More specifically, how much do you feel you know about each of the critical features? (Use the same rating scale as above by circling a number to the right of the critical feature).

Student Critical Features

A. Lower Student adult ratios during core instructional periods	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
B. Continuity of care	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C. High, clear, and fair academic and conduct standards	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D. Provide enriched and diverse opportunities to learn, to perform, and to be recognized.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Adult Critical Features

E. Assume collective responsibility by providing collective incentives and consequences for teaching teams and schools based on improvement in student performance	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
F. Provide instructional autonomy and supports to teams of teachers	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
G. Allow for flexible allocations of available resources by teams and schools.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

READINESS

Staff Survey Items

Based on the information you have about the critical features, how would you rate your readiness to participate in the initiative?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prepared to Have more Discussions about the Initiative			Prepared to Plan Implementation at my school			Prepared to begin Implementing the Critical Features at my school

Roundtable Item

Based on the information you have seen and heard, how prepared are you to implement the critical features?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Prepared			Somewhat-Can Begin Planning			Well Prepared Could Begin Implementing

NOTE: The Roundtable also asked how prepared they were to begin implementing each of the critical features using the above scale and then listed each of the 7 critical features. The Staff Survey did not ask about the individual critical features.

POSSIBILITY

Staff Survey Item

Based on the information you have about the First Things First Initiative in Kansas City, Kansas, how confident are you that the critical features could be implemented in your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All Confident			Somewhat Confident			Very Confident

Roundtable Item

Based on the information you have seen and heard how confident are you that the critical features could be implemented in your school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All Confident			Somewhat Confident			Very Confident

ITEMS THAT APPEAR ON STAFF SURVEY ONLY

AWARENESS

How aware are you of the First Things First Initiative?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All Aware			Somewhat Aware			Very Aware

COMMITMENT

How committed to the First Things First Initiative do you think the Superintendent is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All Committed			Somewhat Committed			Very Committed

How committed to the First Things First Initiative do you think the other Central Office staff are?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All Committed			Somewhat Committed			Very Committed

How committed to the First Things First Initiative do you think the School Board is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All Committed			Somewhat Committed			Very Committed

How committed to the First Things First Initiative do you think the Union Leadership is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All Committed			Somewhat Committed			Very Committed

How committed to the First Things First Initiative do you think the Kansas City, Kansas, community as a whole is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at All Committed			Somewhat Committed			Very Committed

APPENDIX C

Summary of Resource Restructuring and Use of New Resources

The District's primary operating fund is the General Fund, determined annually based on student enrollment. The base State Pupil Aid is $3,725.00 per student. Additional funds come from the Federal Title 1 program, Special Education categorical state aid funding, Federal At-Risk Student funding, grants and the District's In-Service Fund.[26] The District's In-Service Fund is used solely for professional development. The fund reimburses schools for a percent of the amount spent on professional development activities. The annual budget is $1 million.

School Year	Reallocation of Existing Personnel	Reallocation of Existing Resources	New Personnel	New Resources & In-Kind Contributions
1996-1997				**FY97**
Instruction Improvement	■5.5 FTEs SIFS from Curriculum for Wyandotte & Washington Clusters	For SIFs ■Title I (T1) (118,000) ■At-Risk (AR) (18,000) ■General Fund (GF) (168,000)	■FTE FTF Project Dir.	■500,000 Kauffman ■Kauffman-T&C .9 FTE In-Kind
Research	■4 FTE's Research from Spec Ed, Curriculum	■T1 (5,000) ■AR (5,000) ■GF (5,000) ■GF (25,000) Survey		28,800 Kauffman Salary Support – Research
1997-1998				**FY98**
Central Office Support	■1.8 FTEs Sr. Mgmt ■1.8 FTEs Secretarial Sr. Mgmt			■162,500 Kauffman ■ 60 Kauffman Sr. Mgmt In-Kind
Instruction Improvement	■5.5 FTEs SIFs from Curriculum, Counseling, Assessment - H/S Clusters	For SIFs ■AR/TI (50,000) ■36,600 (Goals 2000) ■20,000 (NSF) ■444,250 (GF)	5 FTE SIF	■226,000 Kauffman ■ 7 FTE Kauffman T&C
Research	■2.2 FTEs Research from Spec Ed, Curriculum, Counseling	■AR and T1 (69,000) ■GF (118,000) ■NSF (8,000) ■Tech. Chall. (8,000)	2.0 FTEs Research	■Kauffman-R&E .35 FTE In-Kind ■12,000 Kauffman Survey ■16,000 Kauffman
Public Engagement				■ 3 FTEs Kauffman Comm. Dept. ■1,000 Kauffman Comm.

[26]The District had three Federal grants: Technology Challenge ($6-7 million over five years); National Science Foundation Comprehensive Reform in Science and Mathematics ($3.4 million over five years) and Goals 2000 and Drug and Alcohol Prevention ($1.0 million over five years). The bulk of the funding from these grants provides professional development and training for staff, including support for development of content expertise, technology, instructional development and building research capacity.

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